

WHICH IS THE MAN?

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BY

MRS. MEFKE,

AUTHOR OF

ANECDOTES OF THE ALIAMONT FAMILY,

IL ISMERI, &c.

“TIMPE OMNIA PIVLAT.”

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WHICH IS THE MAN?

CHAP. XXIX.

On the day appointed for the Princess's
the Orkney party dined with Lord
Hartley, and saw the former set
and then for nine for Mr. Beaujeon's, in
out in regimentals, without making
his dress a promise of joining Duncan
any absolute masquerade, as his going
and Aubrey's measure depend upon
there must in the disposition of the
circumstances, supper.
party he should not

He

WHICH IS THE MAN.

He was no sooner gone than Duncan began to question the Marchioness respecting his disguise; she gaily assured him she was not in all her husband's secrets, and positively knew no more than he did, either whether he intended to go to the masquerade, or how he meant to dress admitting that he did. Aubrey gave her credit for the assertion, and thought Duncan was merely trying to make them all believe he was equally ignorant, which he was almost certain was by no means the case.

After an early supper they returned home, when they both assumed used some dominoes and every other appendage towards their disguise necessary after midnight they drove to the Princess's.

Minor did not see the company depart without a sigh, but knew it would be in vain to express a wish to join their party.

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The hotel the Princess inhabited was most superbly illuminated both within and without side; it was also in the Faubourg St. Honoré, and not many doors from the still more superb habitation of Mr. Beaujean.

Duncan was very much struck with the first *coup-d'œil* the grand suite of apartments afforded, which were already nearly filled with a variety of characters, who all seemed to have been desirous to outvie with each other in the splendour of their habita-
ments. Duncan expressed his admiration of the surrounding objects to his companions, as arm in arm they paraded through the magnificent apartments, and surveyed the most brilliant groups by which they were surrounded.

A desire had been expressed upon the cards of invitation that no one would un-
mask

mask before supper, which was to be served at two in the lower rooms, when, upon a certain signal being given, it was expected all disguise should cease. There were so many rooms, and each appropriated to some different amusement, that Duncan soon observed they might be some time before they stumbled upon the Marquis, who might not come till late, if at all, and hitherto he had seen no one at all resembling his figure; this was purposely finding excuses for his absence, Ausby thought, who had seen some gentleman who might, disguised as they all were, have been taken for the Marquis, but did not chuse to contradict his companion, as the more they thought him their dupe the less they would be upon their guard; they therefore continued to pace the rooms, being now and then addressed by some of the maskers, whom Ausby took upon himself to answer, explaining what they and he said to his companion. At last

last they were accosted by a very tall thin figure, whose white beard descended to his girdle, and whose wrinkles were so natural, that he appeared verging towards a hundred; a long black gown compleatly concealed his dress, and a high crowned hat, from under which peeped his straggling white hairs, increased his already tall stature; a white wand denominated his profession; and addressing Aubrey in a broken feeble voice, and in very good German, he told him he was the celebrated Dr. Faustus, come to tell the fortunes of the giddy mortals assembled upon this occasion, having been sent for expressly by the Princess to contribute to the amusement of her guests; though, were he to tell them all the truth, he was, he should depress instead of raise the spirits of many.

"I wish he spoke English," cried the attentive Duncan.

"I speak every language extant, young Lord," was the reply in the same feeble tone,

tone, but in very good English, and will, if you desire it, tell you under what planet you were born."

"Do, good Doctor," was the reply.

"Mars and Venus were in conjunction, and you have already been near marriage, but the second lady you address will possess all those virtues you found wanting in the first. As for you Sir," turning to Ausby, "the early loss of your best friend made you determine never to marry, but the Goddess of Wisdom, who presided at your birth, ordered matters better, and you are now the happy husband of a most amiable woman, whom, had I been previously consulted, I should have advised your bringing here, to profit by my art."

So saying, he retreated among the crowd, and left both Ausby and Duncan very anxious to know who he really was; the height of his figure, and many other circumstances, prevented their supposing it was Lord¹

Hartley: "41

Hartley ; though Ausby knew strange disguises were sometimes assumed when people wished to mislead others.

Duncan would sooner have thought it was his grandfather, and maintained it was by no means impossible the Duke might have followed them there ; however, he would attack him again, dragging Ausby into the crowd in search of him, but he seemed to have vanished ; when Ausby declared it could be no other than Lord Hartley, who, by the means of stilts or some other contrivance, had increased his height.

Upon reflection, indeed, Duncan thought the same ; having privately considered no one but Ferdinand knew of his engagement to Marianna Wilson ; he was therefore more than ever anxious to find the fortune-teller, who would else think he had escaped undetected, he observed twice, therefore, they made the tour of the rooms, but no

such person could they see; when a mask, habited in the exact *costume* of an English fox-hunter, a scratch wig, velvet cap, green hunting frock, scarlet waistcoat, &c. &c. and whose red face proclaimed his frequent sacrifices to Bacchus, slapped Duncan on the shoulder, and saying, in a hoarse voice—“What, have you left the fine plains of North Devon, and given up all your former manly sports for matquerades in a foreign country? For shame! For shame!—What do you expect to learn here?—remember the excellent maxim of old Price. What do you think Simpson would say if he could see his quondam pupil thus turning night into day?—If you did join the giddy group, why did not you, like me, proclaim your country by your dress?”

“If this is Lord Hartley, who was the conjuror?” whispered Duncan to Ausby.

“This is not his Lordship, I am convinced,” was the reply; “it is most probable one of the young men with whom you
dined.

dined at Count O'Donovan's ; but hush ! he is going to sing."

Silence being obtained, to the infinite astonishment of every one present, the Fox-hunter, instead of treating the company with a drinking or hunting song, gave them, in a delightful feigned voice, a very popular French ballad, which, having finished, amidst numerous plaudits, he darted among the crowd, and was soon out of sight.

Ausby and Duncan now separated, agreeing where to meet, being both determined to search for the conjuror : but before the former had proceeded half the length of the room, a very elegant group caught his attention ; a Spanish Duenna leading a closely veiled young lady, both dressed in the superb and ancient *costume* of that country, attended by an usher or 'Squire not less in character ; he followed

with the crowd into the next room, where, just within the door, the Duenna and her fair charge were met by a most elegant young Spaniard, habited in a similar manner, who instantly addressed the veiled fair one in the most high-flown terms of admiration.

The moment he caught sight of the young Iberian, Ausby thought him by far the most like the Marquis of Hartley of any one he had yet seen, and therefore resolved to keep him in sight till he was satisfied. He evidently rather disguised his voice while he endeavoured to draw the Duenna's charge into conversation, who, at last, as well as the 'Squire, suffered herself to be bribed into permitting him to declare his passion by a song to the beautiful damsel under their guard, observing it had been time immemorial the custom for Spaniards to serenade their mistress's; therefore, that they might be sure he was, as he told them,
a noble

a noble Castilian, they should expect him to give them a proof of his skill upon the guitar slung over his shoulder, else they should conclude he was a Frenchman, and as such unworthy the notice of Donna Eloisa, Theresa, Pedrosa, Jayvelina, Maria, Francisca, Virginia, Antonia, Gusinan.

Thus was the farce kept up, while the supposed Castilian tuned his instrument, from which he then drew the most melodious sounds, accompanying it with his voice in so masterly a style, that the crowd around him increased every moment, and he met with such universal applause he was allowed to lead off the Belle in triumph.

It must be Lord Hartley, thought Ausby; the voice, though he had never heard him sing, convinced him he could not be mistaken; yet his Lordship had never, to his knowledge, been in Spain; but that was no

rule, he considered, why he should not be able to personate the character he had assumed, which he had probably, from his proficiency on the guitar, frequently done before. Yet, how come he to be acquainted with this party, who appeared purposely to have met him ?—Might not the Duenna's charge be the very lady who inhabited the villa at Bois de Boulogne ? The Marquis could easily have transferred the tickets intended for his wife and Mrs. Montgomery to her and the Duenna. The Usher might be a common friend ; he had said he should probably come with a party ; therefore hoped the whole, should he be recognized, would be considered as a masquerade frolic, to the conviviality of which the gentlemen had severally contributed their share.

Thus did Ausby follow them, anxiously devising means to satisfy his curiosity, till
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the Spaniard suddenly disappeared through a private door; and the Lady being joined by her attendants, again mixed with the crowd.

Ausby wished to see Duncan, yet was loth to lose sight of this female, whom he followed to the great staircase, where they waited a short time, as if in expectation of somebody, when the young Spaniard from below, made them a sign to descend, which they instantly did; Ausby, with many more who were departing previous to the signal being given for unmasking, following them down.

In the Court stood a very handsome plain coach, into which the Spaniard having handed the Duenna and her charge, jumped in after them, first unmasking and wiping his face, which convinced Ausby he had not been mistaken in his conjectures; he therefore stepped forward, and in his natural

ral voice, though he did not unmask, wished him a pleasant drive to Boulogne.

“ You are a very pretty fellow to keep a secret,” was the reply, in a voice too familiar to Aufby’s ears to suffer him to entertain any doubts respecting the speaker, even had he not seen his face, “ but whoever you are let me recommend you to be more discreet—good night.”

Perfectly satisfied, and curious to know how Lord Hartley would account for this adventure, Aufby returned up stairs, in search of Duncan, whom he found at the faro table, taking up a handful of Louis’.

“ So ! so !—you seem to have been once more tempting fortune ;” he said in a whisper, when near enough.

“ Why, after lurking all about for you and the fortune teller, without being able to find either, I came here, and while looking
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ing on, I saw the *figure* lose five times running, so I c'en risked the largest sum I will ever again stake, that is five guineas upon it, and having won, I continued to play, and believe I am now about a hundred and twenty Louis into pocket. But where have you been? I rather suppose Lord Hartley is not here, except the Fortune-teller or the Squire were him; but if so, they have certainly vanished.

"He represented neither of those characters," replied Ausby.

"Then you have seen him," said Duncan very eagerly; "Where is he?"

"He has left the hotel," was the reply; "and can you affirm, upon your honour, you did not know what disguise he would assume?"

"I can, safely," said the astonished Duncan.

"And I will be answerable for his veracity," said the Fortune teller, tapping Ausby on the shoulder, "and that you are mistaken

mistaken in your conjectures respecting your friend."

"I merely believed the evidence of my eyes and ears, reverend Doctor, but I begin to fancy you have been instructed in your part by the noble Castilian I allude to."

At that moment the signal for unmasking was given, and the company were informed the supper rooms were open for their reception; a general bustle ensued, and the Fortune-teller, in three seconds, disengaging himself from his hat, wig, and cloak, appeared to the astonished Ausby, and no less surprized Duncan, to be the Marquis of Huntley in the very suit of regimentals in which he had left home, his hair alone having suffered any derangement from his disguise; a pair of clogs, or rather wooden pattens, had served to increase his height and puzzle his friends, which, having taken off, he began to laugh very heartily, to think how completely he had

had taken them in ; adding, Mr. Beaujeon himself had recommended and furnished him with his dress, from among the wardrobe belonging to his private theatre. He also provided Lord Fitzowen with the fox-hunter's dress, and instructed him how to address you, as I thought it very possible you would mistake him for me.

Auby did not feel so much inclined to laugh. How his Lordship had managed to undress and dress since he saw him set out for Boulogne, he could not divine ; but, convinced he had personated the Spaniard, said, " I must own your Lordship has both surprized and puzzled me this evening ; you certainly enacted Dr. Faustus to admiration ; and your sudden metamorphosis would almost tempt me to believe you had studied his art in earnest ; it however convinced me you could deceive much wiser people than myself, were you so inclined."

" But

“ But, pray what have you done with the Duenna and her fair charge ? surely you have not suffered them to go home alone ! that would be incompatible with the gallantry of a Castilian.” ~

“ Nay, now you are trying to puzzle me,” rejoined the laughing Ferdinand. “ I certainly did see the Duenna and her veiled companion, and was also much amused by the young Spaniard’s declaration of his passion ; but I am positively, not to my knowledge, acquainted with any of them ; are you ?”

“ Not with the ladies, my Lord ; the elegant Spaniard, I thought I recollected the moment I saw him ; and his address to me afterwards confirmed my suspicions.”

“ Then, pray, who was he ? if an Englishman, he deserved infinite credit for so well supporting his character,” said Ferdinand ; “ for my own part, as I said before, I neither knew, nor guessed who they were.”

Surely,

Surely, thought Ausby, a very strong likeness has again deceived me, or else thou hast the greatest share of assurance ever yet fell to the lot of mortal; but as there was a possibility his Lordship might for the present wish to wave the subject, he said no more, merely proposing to adjourn into the supper-rooms, where every thing art or luxury could invent, or money could purchase, was set out to tempt the appetite and flatter the imagination of those present.

The Marquis of Hartley was both known and particularly distinguished by most of the first nobility present, with some few of whom Ausby was also acquainted, who heard Ferdinand generally applauded for the spirit with which he had supported his character; nor did the elegant Spanish groupe pass unnoticed; most people had admired, and all regretted they had left the hotel before supper; after which dancing
began.

begun, and the ball was kept up till day light that morning.

About six, Duncan and Ausby retired, leaving Ferdinand behind them, who told them he had promised to return with the party which had supped at Mr. Beaujeon's, to partake of a *Reveillon*, or morning repast, that was to be prepared for them at eight. Rather, thought Ausby, to visit the fair syren who inhabits the villa you so often frequent; but did not think proper to mention his suspicions.

During their journey home, Duncan seriously enquired who the young Spaniard was?

"Are you really ignorant," was the reply!"

"Absolutely, upon my honour; which is, I believe, according to law, swearing to the truth of what I have asserted."

"Then,

"Then I presume you are not in all Lord Hartley's secrets," said Ausby, laughing, with assumed gaiety.

"I never supposed he had any; I am sure he never told me any thing he need either to have kept a secret, or been ashamed of; and I really believe him to be a man of the strongest principles and greatest integrity."

"I have no reason to doubt your assertions, but I thought you might have known the Marquis intended to come with the party he is to breakfast with, and how he intended to disguise himself."

"No, positively, nor did I suppose he was the Fortune-teller till he unveiled."

Their arrival at home put an end to the conversation, and they retired to their respective apartments: Duncan to sleep off his fatigue; Ausby to ruminate upon this second and still more extraordinary masquerade adventure.

CHAP. XXX.

FINDING it impossible to close his eyes, Ausby rose very early : he had slept alone, not to disturb the repose of Lady Helen ; and the morning being fine, he strolled out, bending his steps towards the Bois de Boulogne, where he now found the private door out of which he had seen the Marquis issue. He took particular notice of every surrounding object, and made such observations upon the house as enabled him to discern its other front, which looked into the village of Boulogne. A gardener was at work in the shrubbery next the road, as the house stood very retired indeed, and was hardly visible, except when
fought

fought after. Convinced he was not known to the man, and most likely not to his employers, if the mansion was inhabited by the ladies he suspected, who, at all events, were certainly not yet stirring, and the Marquis, admitting he was there, would not come out the front way, he therefore thought he might safely ask the man a few questions; and from no one could he expect truer or better information: so making him a sign to advance, he enquired if the house was not to be let.

“Not that I know of, Sir.”

“I have heard there is a house somewhere hereabouts that is,” rejoined Ausby: “from the description I received, I thought this had been it; but I have forgot the name of the ladies who now occupy it. Pray who resides here?”

“Two ladies, Sir.”

“Aye, an elderly lady and her daughter.”

“I believe

"I believe they are, Sir."

"English, if I mistake not?"

"I can't inform you; I only know they are foreigners: they have not been long here; but I think I have heard the house-servants say they are Spanish: for my own part, all I know is, that they pay me for my labours, tho' I can't understand what they say. The young lady is a very great beauty, let her be who she will."

"You have seen the gentleman that sometimes visits there, I presume," said Ausby, with a knowing look, and significant smile.

"Yes; I knew him twice come in, and several times go out when I have been at work behind the house: the garden opens into the Bois de Boulogne."

"I know it does; I therefore think this is the house I mean. There is a private door, of which the gentleman has a

"Oh! I find, Sir, you know all how and about

about it. I should be sorry they were going, though it matters not much to me, as I am in the service of the Duke de Gifon, and take care of this house when he neither lets nor lends it to his friends, who then pay me for my time, and give me my board ; and I dare say were these ladies to go, I should have no reason to regret their loss if you are coming in."

" There is an earnest of my liberality, my friend," replied Ausby, putting a six livre piece into the man's hand, which quite won his warm heart, and rendered him as communicative as he could have wished. As for the ladies' names, he had never been able to remember them, and the gentleman's he had never heard : the last time he had seen him was three mornings before, when he had gone out in great haste, wrapped in his long cloak."

" Aye, between ten and eleven."

" What, I suppose, sir, you were waiting for him, for that was the exact time, as

'near as I can guess. Could not you describe his figure to me, then I should be better able to judge whether we both mean the same person?"

"La, Sir, I should be very much at a loss to describe him, as you call it; I can only say, he is the handsomest young gentleman I ever clapped my eyes on."

"Aye; very fair, light eyes."

"No, no, Sir; I am sure we don't mean the same person: he is as brown, nay, browner than you are; seems to me about three or four-and-twenty," continuing as nearly as possible to describe the figure and features of Lord Hartley, whom Ausby was now convinced was a frequent, and the only visitor the inhabitants of the villa received. Being thus far satisfied, he walked home with all imaginable speed, and found the family-party waiting breakfast for him, to whom he excused himself by saying, the late hour at which he had retired having prevented him from sleeping, he had been
taking

taking a walk, by way of shaking off the stupor which hung about him; and during their meal,* Duncan and himself gave an account of their diversion at the masquerade. Elinor acknowledged she should have liked to have seen the Marquis of Hartley in his conjuror's dress, and laughed at Duncan for having been so easily taken in by his Lordship, who made his appearance in the midst of her mirth, and soon learned what had occasioned it, and in his turn, observed Mr. Ausby appeared to have some difficulty to believe his eyes when he did unmask; nay, from what he had said, he rather apprehended he thought he had personated the young Spaniard, which was certainly paying him a very high compliment, as every body agreed he was one of the most elegant figures in the room, and supported his character with the greatest propriety. This was almost more than Ausby could listen to in silence, yet he reflected that the Marquis might have very

strong reasons for thus giving him to understand he trusted to his discretion, for so he understood him, and would have blamed himself very severely for saying any thing in his pet which might induce others to entertain even a suspicion of what he now considered as beyond a doubt; namely, that his Lordship kept a mistress, not doubting but when opportunity offered, he would enter into some explanation, which would afford him an excuse for remonstrating with him upon the imprudence of his conduct. But day after day passed without the Marquis of Hartley taking the least notice of what Ausby thought he would be so anxious to explain; indeed, they had never been *tête-à-tête*, he reflected, since the masquerade; he therefore still had his hopes whenever that happened, that his Lordship would either endeavour to excuse himself, or honestly confess his faults. Chance at last brought them together rather unexpectedly; it was

was a fine frosty morning, and the two young men and himself were going to ride to Seve Penthievre, when his Grace told Duncan, if it was not too late for the post when he returned, he should wish him to write a letter or two for him, which had been neglected the last post-day. Ever ready to oblige his grandfather, Duncan ordered his horse into the stable again, desiring the Marquis and Ausby to set off, and he would either overtake or meet them, as he wished to scrawl the letters over before he left home.

“ Then we will ride to St. Cloud instead of Seve,” said Ausby, “ and will wait your coming in the Bois de Boulogne. You will find us between the gate leading to Paris, and that which goes into the village, from which the wood takes its name.”

Knowing he should thus pass the back front of the house, he supposed the Mar-

quis had either hired or borrowed of the Duke de Gifon; as they approached, Ausby took particular care to keep on the left hand, and to watch the Marquis's countenance and eyes, who certainly did look rather particularly at the very house in question, remarking, it was delightfully situated.

"Yes," replied Ausby, "and those two doors which open into the wood render them very convenient."

"Undoubtedly," said the Marquis; "and if I mistake not, that one," pointing with his whip, "belongs to the Duke de Gifon; think I recollect that temple in the garden, as I once or twice supped there with his Grace when I was last at Paris: he then kept a celebrated opera dancer in that very mansion, and used to give what are called *petit-soupers* once or twice a week to a few select friends, who, if they were so provided, brought their *cheres amies*

amies to visit his. And has your Lordship never visited so elegant a retreat since you have now been in Paris?"

"Never: but why that incredulous look, my dear Ausby? have I ever given you any reason to doubt my veracity?"

"Why then, positively, Marquis, either you have deceived me, or I saw you come marching that way back door wrapped in a long grey cloak not more than ten days ago."

"Then, upon my honour, your eyes did deceive you: I positively have never set foot into any of those houses these ten years."

Ausby involuntarily checked his horse, which in consequence stood stock still. The Marquis as instantly did the same, their eyes meeting nearly at the same moment, and each countenance expressing the greatest surprize. "Am I to believe my eyes or my ears?" ejaculated Ausby: "I could

could positively have taken an oath I saw your Lordship make your exit from that very door at the time I mention; yet I feel it impossible to doubt your word; but since we are upon the subject, I presume, now we are *tête à-tête*, you will not deny having personated the young Spaniard at the masquerade."

Ferdinand burst out a laughing, which highly provoked Ausby, who observed, that he did not perceive any thing so very laughable in his Lordship's paying such marked attention as he had done to the Spanish lady, or to any woman, Lady Hartley excepted, though he certainly had no right to criticise or censure his actions.

"Why then, you still think I was the admirer of the fair Iberian?" cried Ferdinand.

"I positively do, my Lord. Did not you leave the ladies while you went, I suppose,

suppose, in quest of their carriage ? Did you not beckon them down stairs, and having handed them into a very plain though handsome coach, did not you unmask, and reply in English to my wish, that you might have a pleasant drive to Boulogne ?”

For some seconds Ferdinand remained silent and motionless, with his eyes fixed upon Ausby, and then said, “ Surely, my dear Sir, you are diverting yourself with perplexing me, for upon my soul I am tempted to think you insane ; as I declare, upon my honour, which I never knowingly forfeited, I neither assumed the disguise, nor know who did personate the Spaniard you so narrowly watched at Mr. Beaujon’s. With the assistance of his valet, I dressed as Dr. Faustus ; and I think you must have perceived, when I threw off my disguise, I dressed as when I left home, and till that time I never unmasked, nor

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did

did I once, from not knowing them, even accost the ladies you fancy I handed into their carriage."

"Then your Lordship may well think me insane, for I positively would have sworn you were the Spaniard whom I addressed, and who answered me in a voice so like yours, it confirmed my delusion."

"What you say is really very extraordinary; he certainly appeared much about my stature, but that he should so exactly resemble me in point of features, and that his voice should also mislead you, borders upon the wonderful.

"Then, what will your Lordship say, when I declare this is not the first time I have been equally deceived;" relating his meeting with the stranger at Lisle; then his having, as he thought, seen him come out of the garden door belonging to the Duke de Giron's house, which had induced him to suppose he kept a lady, whom he presumed had personated the Duenna's charge

charge at the masquerade ; declaring the real regard he entertained for his Lordship had alone made him anxious to fathom what he had always considered as very mysterious.

The Marquis laughed very much during this recital, affirming the stranger's disguise both at Lille and at Paris must have misled him with respect to his features, admitting them to be one and the same person, which was by no means ascertained ; and as for his having seen a tall figure, wrapped in a *manteau à l'anne fortune*, emerge from the Duke de Gilon's garden, that was surely a very unfavourable moment to scrutinize any one's features ; however, thus far you may believe me, my good friend, though I am no Saint, never yet denied my faults ; and I can assure you I have never, either at home or abroad, kept a mistress since I gave my hand to Lady Hartley. Before I married, I won't pretend to

say I have not paid my devoirs at the shrines of some of the modern heroines, having perhaps but too ample means to gratify both their wishes and my own ; but from the moment I commenced a Benedict, I resolved to act up to the principles I had ever professed, as I was early taught to believe the example of the richer classes have very great influence upon the minds of their inferiors, which very notion induced me always to pay a proper deference to the general opinion even while single, as I never gloried even in those follies I did not scruple to commit, though when taxed, I never denied them ; but publicly to set decency and morality at defiance is surely injuring society in general, and no man detests hypocrisy more than myself ; still, avowed depravity has perhaps a worse tendency, and does more harm to the cause of virtue. I am sensible many young men in my situation would have found excuses for maintaining a favourite lady,

lady, to pass away an idle hour, as I certainly did not marry for love, but from a wish to oblige the very best of fathers, and who never preaches what he does not practise : he was convinced I had every prospect of being completely happy in the connubial state, as he knew I had long been tenderly beloved by a very accomplished woman, and of whom both him and my mother had the highest opinion. Nor could I make a single serious objection to Lady Frances Cameron ; but I believe we had been too intimate from children to render me a very ardent lover : indeed, honestly speaking, I merely esteemed her at the time I led her to the altar."

"Now, in my opinion," interrupted Ausby, "Lady Hartley has scarcely her equal either in point of beauty, understanding, temper, and accomplishments."

"Nor in mine now, my dear Sir ; and I have positively blamed myself very severely

verely for having ever treated such a woman with indifference, though I don't believe, my father excepted, there is another man in the world besides yourself to whom I would have made such an acknowledgment; not that I ever gave her reason to complain of my neglect, but I had mistaken her character, or perhaps she had mine; be that as it may, I am now perfectly sensible of her worth; her rapid recovery is alone required to render us completely happy, therefore you will believe I was never less inclined to seek amusement abroad. We have never come to any explanation, yet we have both discovered we have hitherto been in an error respecting each other's dispositions, and our love being founded in esteem, promises fair to bid defiance even to age and wrinkles."

"I trust it does, my Lord, and I feel proud upon having received such a mark of your confidence. No one has rejoiced more than myself at the Marchioness's rapid
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pid recovery : indeed, my regard for both made me anxious to come to this very explanation, as I really did fear you had formed some other attachment, which I knew must be very inimical to that conjugal felicity I trust you will ever enjoy."

"I am flattered by the interest you evidently take in our welfare, Mr. Ausby ; at present, I consider myself as one of fortune's favourites, for had the Marchioness's disorder proved fatal, I should have reproached myself for having accepted the hand of a woman I have not till lately loved. Now I am only fearful of giving into the other excess."

The appearance of Duncan, who came galloping towards them, changed the conversation ; and having explored the various beauties of the park of St. Cloud, they returned to Paris, where they separated at the gate of the hotel Lord Hartley inhabited. As soon as he was alone, Ausby seriously

riously reflected upon what had passed between him and Ferdinand, and was almost tempted to believe he was under the influence of some delusion; both at Lisle and at the house in the Bois de Boulogne he might have been mistaken; and the gardener's description according with his suspicions, he had taken for granted Lord Hartley visited the ladies who inhabited the villa; which, if his Lordship was sincere, was certainly a very unjust suspicion; but then if Aubrey had not been deceived, as he was led to believe, what a dangerous character must Lord Hartley be!—could any man be so depraved!—he trusted not, though appearances he could not help thinking, in spite of all his Lordship's protestations, were very much against him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

TWO months had now elapsed since their arrival in Paris ; and as the Marchioness mended daily, and the Duke of Orkney had never been in better health, they had almost given up the thought of moving any farther southward.

Duncan continued to study French with unremitting application, and began to make himself very tolerably understood, which was one reason, as has been before observed, why his Grace did not mean to change his quarters : though Duncan having visited all the public places, and seen most of
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the public buildings, began to long after the field sports, frequently wishing the king of France would allow him to shoot upon his manor, having seen plenty of game during his rides round the metropolis.

The Duke could have procured him this liberty, but was fearful it would induce him to neglect his studies, and therefore did not chuse to make the attempt.

Lady Hartley, having nearly recovered her health and her spirits together, visited and was visited by all the French nobility of her husband's acquaintance, who all strove to render her residence at Paris a source of continual amusement; and she still devoted a great deal of her time to Lady Helen and Elinor; the latter generally accompanying her into public places, on those evenings which she dedicated to such amusements.

• Ferdinand

Ferdinand and her Ladyship, and Mrs. Montgomery were dining at the Duke's, and laughing at some of Duncan's original remarks respecting the French nation, when Lord David and Mr. Cameron were announced and shewn in, just as the desert was placed upon the table.

After the first general compliments, which the Envoy made rather prolix, the Duke enquired if they had dined, and was answered in the affirmative. Lord David then proceeded to inform them, that he had been detained much longer in England than he had expected, owing to various circumstances of a political tendency and of a secret nature, and sincerely rejoiced to find that neither his Grace, nor Lord or Lady Hartley, had yet quitted Paris, where (the season being yet very unfavourable for travelling, and nothing of particular moment calling him into Tuscany,) he had permission to spend a month or six weeks.

His

His auditors endeavoured to appear pleased at this intelligence, and Orlando once more essayed to compliment Elinor into a better opinion of him : nor was he less attentive to Duncan, whose title he so often resounded in his ears, that the young rustic told him he was sick of the burthen of his song.

The new comers had taken up their abode at a hotel in an adjacent street ; and Orlando, no way silenced by the late rebuff he had received, declared himself quite a stranger in Paris ; he therefore intended to put himself under his cousin's directions, who had ere this, he presumed, visited every thing worthy a traveller's notice.

While the frivolous young man was thus endeavouring to pay his court to the still unpolished Duncan, Lord David, with more finesse, was doing the same to Lord Hartley, whom he hoped to flatter into an
introduction

introduction of his son to some of the French nobility, it being one of his maxims to make himself friends at every court. He therefore declared his joy at finding her Ladyship so much recovered; hoped the amendment of her health would rather be an inducement to her to visit Florence, where he should make it his study to render her residence agreeable, and their warm spring breezes would effectually prevent any future relapse of her complaint.

Her Ladyship had never before left England, though she had frequently expressed a wish to visit the Land of Arts, as Italy is generally termed; but was become fearful of expressing a desire that might not meet Lord Hartley's approbation.

The Marquis thus acquainted with her wishes, and eager if possible to anticipate them, told Lord David, if the Marchioness's health mended as rapidly as it had hitherto

thereto done, and her strength was equal to the undertaking of so long a journey, they would certainly visit Florence, and perhaps Naples, taking Germany in their road home, by way of seasoning her again to the variable climate of England.

“ A most excellent plan,” said the Envoy; who trusted his father would be tempted to follow his example.

“ My travels are every where drawing to a conclusion,” replied the Duke; “ and I think when I next move, it will be northward, instead of southward: But should Lord Hartley continue in his present mind, and should I be able to prevail upon Austrey to accompany him; for I neither wish him to be a restraint upon the Marquis, nor to send him alone, I should like Duncan to take the exact tour which his Lordship has described, while I return into Scotland with Lady Helen and Elinor.”

“ But

“ But why exclude my sister and niece, my dear Sir,” asked the Envoy, “ since Lady Hartley will be of the party.”

“ Because I don’t wish to remain alone, and am resolved not to visit Italy.”

The subject was, however, so frequently renewed by Lord David, during that evening and the two following days, it was at last finally settled, that Lord and Lady Hartley, and Mrs. Montgomery, Duncan and Ausby, should accompany the Envoy to Florence, and from thence to Naples, &c. and either return across the Alps, or by the Tyrol into Germany, early in the ensuing autumn, that they might reach England before winter. It being now the latter end of January, they decided to set off the last week in February, by which means they would reach Italy in the very finest part of the year, and find it very pleasant travelling, as they were going southward.

Miss

Miss Melrose was the only one who did not approve of these arrangements ; she therefore ventured to hint to her mother that she should like very much to visit Italy, and wondered her grandfather should object to take so pleasant a journey.

“ He is seventy-five, you ought to recollect,” replied Lady Helen ; “ that you told him you only wished to come abroad to be his nurse : what, therefore, do you suppose he would think, were he to know you repined at returning with him into Scotland ? ”

Elinor was effectually silenced, tho’ the thoughts of the approaching separation, greatly depressed her spirits, as she had always seen, and most days conversed with Lord Hartley, since their arrival in Paris ; and she was very much attached to the Marchioness, who might, she thought, have asked her to accompany her into Italy. Why was not the Marquis as nearly related

lated to her as to Orlando Cameron?—Had that been the case, she would certainly not have been left behind; as it was, he could not, with propriety, interfere in her behalf; nor could she mention her wishes to the only person likely to take any pains to gratify them: she was therefore obliged to conceal even her chagrin, lest, she reflected, it should be attributed to a wrong cause.

On the evening the Italian journey had been absolutely settled, Duncan retired rather earlier than usual, having complained of a cold and sore throat, which increased so much before morning, that his Grace thought it necessary to send for a physician, who, however, pronounced it to be only of that nature as to require a few days nursing: he was therefore requested to keep his room, and to take a few warm floss, made according to the doctor's direction; though the invalid declared it was a thousand pities to remain at home so fine a frosty

frosty morning, observing that he had half promised the Marquis of Hartley to breakfast with him.

Ausby promised to be the bearer of his excuses. Setting out accordingly, he found the Marchioness and Mrs. Montgomery at breakfast; and learnt from the former, the Marquis was gone to take that meal with a friend, and had requested they would tell Lord Donalbain, should he call, he would find him at the *Caf   Clair*.

All Ausby's suspicions revived by this incident.—Duncan was certainly in Lord Hartley's secrets, and they both enjoyed duping him: without allowing himself, therefore, time for reflection, he proceeded to the *Bois de Boulogne*, which he reached in less than an hour, and immediately made for the private door which was so continually in his mind, and which he had not had an opportunity of visiting of late, though
he

he had long intended to have a little farther conversation with the gardener, which might, he thought, have silenced those doubts he continued, against his will, to entertain. He soon came in sight of the very place he had so accurately remarked, and immediately perceived, waiting in sight of the well-known door, the very carriage which had conveyed the young Spaniard and the ladies from the Princess's, and which he now recollected to have been the same that conveyed the supposed Lord Hartley to Paris, on the morning he had seen him emerge from that particular garden.

The coachman, a shrewd-looking fellow, had his eyes frequently turned towards the private door, and appeared evidently in expectation of some signal from within.—This, therefore, is my time, thought he, to be perfectly satisfied, it being, though a private, also a common path : He walked slowly

slowly along by the side of the wall, taking a book out of his pocket, which he began to read, but it being too cold to permit him to walk sufficiently slow, he returned it into his pocket, and began to reflect upon what he was thus almost instinctively doing; for after all, should this be the Marquis of Hurlley, as he had formerly, and even still suspected, who might very easily keep this carriage unknown even to those servants, who were not in his secret; but what would, in that case, be the consequence of their meeting? His Lordship would certainly consider him as a spy, and after what he had averred, would doubtless be very angry to find himself detected.—Such an interview might, therefore, bring their hitherto friendly intercourse to a period, a thing, of all others (upon many accounts) he wished to avoid; he therefore retreated among the trees, which did not afford him so much shelter as he could have desired,

desired, determined as he was to keep his eyes upon the door.

It was too hard a frost for the gardener to be at work, or he would have tried to have seen him ; he therefore only endeavoured to avoid giving the coachman any reason to suppose that he was watching his master's actions, by walking to and fro, frequently looking toward the village, as if in momentary expectation of being joined by some person, for whom he was waiting . He continued this exercise and these manœuvres for a quarter of an hour or more, till he was both tired and ashamed of remaining so long upon the same spot, frequently reflecting that Lord Hartley's actions could not concern him ; and should he see and recognize him, he must, however he might be himself to blame, consider him as a curious, impertinent, busy fellow. He therefore reluctantly resolved to return to Paris, but had scarcely formed

the resolution, before he heard the identical door hastily open, and, upon turning his head, perceived the very same gentleman that he had before remarked, wrapped in the same grey coat, putting the key into his pocket, and then running towards the carriage in waiting.

Ausby's first impulse, in spite of his late prudent determination, was to follow him ; he therefore sprung forward among the trees, and would most likely have come up with him before he reached the coach, if his foot had not caught against a stump, which brought him to the ground with some violence, at the very moment he was stepping into the beaten path : the coachman seeing him fall, and, perhaps, guessing the occasion of his speed, burst into a violent fit of laughter, to the infinite mortification of the almost disabled Ausby, who had rolled one of his knees so severely in his fall, that he was scarcely able to move
when

when he first arose, just in time to see the young gentleman jump into the carriage, the door of which had been opened, and the step let down the moment he appeared, and was now as expeditiously closed; the coachman then mounted his box, and drove off, as before, full speed.—In a very bad humour, and in very great pain, Ausby limped homewards, acknowledging that he greatly deserved the accident he had met with, and by no means satisfied respecting the person he had been so meanly watching, as no one could have arraigned his late conduct with more severity than he now did himself; and he had had too transient a glimpse of the stranger either to have his doubts realized or confuted.

CHAP. XXXI

THE curious impertinent, as Aubrey now styled himself, hobbled along as fast as he could towards Paris, resolving to look in upon the Marquis before he went home, to learn if he was returned, and, in that case, to endeavour to discover whether he was the person he had so incautiously watched.

The Marquis neither was, nor had been at home ; a corroborating proof in his opinion, that it was him he had so lately seen : he next asked for the Marchioness, the servant seemed rather surprized at the question, saying, not without hesitation, “ he thought

thought her Ladyship had been gone to the Duke of Orkney's."

"Very possible," replied Ausby: "I did not come from home, nor have I been there since I was last here. Nothing has happened, I hope."

"I really don't know, Sir; my lady was out for about a quarter of an hour ago, and James, who came for her, mentioned something about a night Lady Helen and Miss Melhols had met with; but ——"

Ausby did not stay to hear what farther he had to say, and upon his arrival at home found the family in the greatest consternation, and learnt from the servants that Lady Helen's carriage had drove against another, which had been overturned, and a gentleman who was in it had been taken out for dead; which had so much alarmed Miss Melhols, that she had been brought home in a fit, from which she was not yet recovered.

Forgetting his own bruises, in his anxiety for his wife and Elinor, he ran up stairs into the latter's apartment, where, supported by the mistress of the hotel and her own maid, sat Lady Helen, whom they were endeavouring to prevent from fainting, by holding volatiles to her nose, and every other usual remedy upon such occasions.

Upon the bed laid the apparently lifeless Elinor, whom a surgeon, assisted by the Marchioness of Hartley, and Mrs. Montgomery, were endeavouring to revive, while the Duke, who was absolutely half frantic, was pacing the room, bewailing the loss of his beloved grand-daughter, whom he maintained, in spite of the surgeon's assurances to the contrary, was no more.

The appearance of her husband seemed to animate Lady Helen, whom he first approached, and a violent flood of tears having

ing eased her bursting heart, she was able to express a wish to speak to him in the adjoining room, whither he immediately led her; and having made her take some drops the surgeon had been mixing for her, he eagerly enquired what had happened.

“ Sit down by me,” was the reply, in an audible whisper; “ we cannot be of any service in the next room, every thing that can be done for my darling Elinor, will, I am convinced, be tried.”

“ Undoubtedly, my love, and the surgeon seems to entertain no very serious apprehensions respecting her; but what occasioned her fit, have you been overturned?”

“ No; we set out, Elinor and myself, about an hour ago, meaning to make some purchases at a milliner's, to whom we have been recommended, in the Fauxbourg St. Germain; our coachman, for the nearest I suppose, crossed the Carrousel, and, contrary to my express orders, drove furiously through the arch-way leading to the Pont
“ b 6 Royal;

Royal ; unfortunately, another coachman, equally rash, who was coming towards us, caught our hind wheel, as we were upon the sweep, and unable to stop his horses, tore it off with so violent a jerk, that the sudden shock overturned the carriage he drove, and shivered our glass on the side my daughter was sitting and looking out ; but she received no injury from the accident, our coach having merely fallen on one side, and I was almost immediately assisted to alight ; but not before the Marquis——”

Her ladyship paused, and looked very anxiously at her impatient husband, who hastily exclaimed, “ The Marquis ! who ? what do you mean ? Sure, in God, it was not Lord Hartley ! ”

“ I am afraid you have divined the fatal truth ; for at the moment a very well dressed man was requesting that I would permit him to assist me to alight, Elinor flung her arms

arms round my neck, and giving a faint scream, murmured out, ‘ the Marquis of Hartley is killed,’ and fell into the fit, from which she is not yet recovered ”

“ Merciful God ! ” exclaimed Ausby, “ what a dreadful catastrophe ! then it must have been him that I saw : the carriage was dark green ; the horses brown bay.”

“ I believe you are right,” she replied ; but I neither saw Lord Hartley nor his carriage, and was too much concerned for my daughter, at the time, to make even the necessary enquiries humanity required.”

“ Does the Marchioness know what has befallen her husband ? ”

“ Not yet ; I sent for her the moment we reached home, to spare her the dreadful shock of seeing him brought home lifeless, though I still hope he was only stunned by the fall : but how came he in the coach, and alone ? I was in hopes Elinor had been mistaken ; but the effect of his Lordship’s accident has had upon her, leaves me

me little room to suppose her eyes deceived her, and at the same time convinces me she possesses a too susceptible heart."

"Come, come, her fright was very natural, I hope she will soon recover; but what must we say to the Marchioness?"

"Nothing till we hear how the Marquis is; people are very seldom killed by such accidents, though I remember most of the by-standers pronounced him dead. The very reflection nearly deprives me of my senses; do run, and see whether he has been taken home, while I return to my daughter."

Ausby, not less anxious than herself, supported her to the door of Elinor's room, who he found had not given any signs of returning life, though the surgeon continued to prognosticate she would very speedily. Conscious he could not accelerate the wished-for moment he re-seated his wife, and left the apartment in a state of mind

mind he would have found it very difficult to define. He had long suspected Elinor felt a too tender sentiment for this abominable libertine, as he now thought Lord Hartley, whose hypocrisy added to the detestation he now felt for him; nor was he much less angry with the too susceptible Elinor. The vengeance of Heaven appeared, however, to have overtaken the guilty Hartley, whose wife was the only person he just then found himself inclined to commiserate. At all events she must know that he had met with this accident; he reflected, admitting he had not, as it was supposed, been killed upon the spot, and if he was merely dangerously hurt, how would he account for having been in this strange carriage, and in disguise; it would require some art to tell a plausible tale, likely even to deceive the Marchioness. He had reached their antichamber, during these reflections, where several of the ser-

vants were assembled ; among the rest was Lady Helen's footman, of whom he inquired how the accident had happened. He repeated nearly what her Ladyship had said, laying the blame upon the other coachman.

“ But did you see the gentleman whom Lady Helen heard was killed ? ”

“ Yes, Sir, I did see him, taken out of the coach, and he certainly looked dead enough ; but I was too much frightened about my lady to give him any assistance.”

“ Well ; but what sort of a man was he ? how was he dressed ? what was the colour of his carriage ? ”

“ The coach was dark green, Sir. The gentleman's dress I did not see, for he was wrapped in a grey cloak, and the crowd prevented me from having a good view of his face ; though, but I am sure, I would hardly believe my own eyes, I thought,
from

from the glimpse I did catch, he was very like Lord Hartley ; his hair I knew was dark."

" But you don't suppose it was his Lordship ?" asked the still doubting Ausby.

" If I had not known that I must be mistaken, Sir, I really should have thought it was his Lordship."

" What made you so confident you were mistaken in your conjectures ? and why did not you make some enquiries ?"

" I can't speak French, you know, Sir, and durst not leave my lady and Miss."

" But did not you see which way the gentleman went, or more properly was carried ?"

" Into a large hotel very near, Sir, and I came home with my lady."

Perfectly convinced Lord Hartley was the very person that had occasioned his late fall, Ausby set out for his hotel, meditating as he walked along upon the abominable

ble duplicity the Marquis had displayed. Thinking it very probable he had nothing about him when he met with his accident likely to lead to a discovery of his rank or name, with which it was very possible even the man who drove him was unacquainted; he would therefore first go to his lodgings, and if he was not returned he would hasten to the Carrousel; supposing from what the footman had said he had been taken to the Hotel du Roi.

The Marquis's servants were all assembled in the antichamber, his valet was just asking the grooms whether his Lordship meant to go out on horseback or in the curicle, as Ausby entered, which convinced him his accident was not yet known to his household: he, therefore, telling the valet he wanted to speak with him, led the way into the saloon, where, looking stedfastly at the man, he enquired whether he knew where his master was gone?

“ No,

“ No, really, Sir.”

“ I am fearful he has met with an accident,” rejoined Ausby, “ which made me so particular in my enquiries.”

“ Heaven forbid !” cried the agitated servant, “ for a better master never existed.”

“ He was not with Lady Helen ?”

“ No : but——”

At that moment in walked the very person Ausby was enquiring after ; exclaiming, “ How are you, my dear friend ?”—Ausby never felt himself happier ; as angry as he felt himself, no one would have more sincerely regretted the fine young man who addressed him ; the valet’s countenance was equally expressive of satisfaction, while he hastily ejaculated, “ God be praised !” and left the room.

Ferdinand, who had fixed his eyes upon Ausby, after a moment’s pause, asked, what was the matter ?

“ I was

“ I was fearful you had met with a very dangerous accident.”

“ Why, who can you have seen likely to have mentioned, in such exaggerated terms, what hardly deserves the name of a contusion. But where is Lady Hartley ? I hope she has not been alarmed for my safety ?”

“ I believe not, she is at our hotel ; but it is useless to attempt to deceive me, my Lord : will you, therefore, candidly, inform me where you have been this morning ? and how you met with what you term a slight contusion ?”

“ Upon my honour I am at a loss to guess your meaning, Sir, nor did I know you considered yourself authorized to inquire, and in so peremptory a tone, where I have been, and what has befallen me ? I can only say, I do not feel myself inclined to answer questions put in such a manner, nor prefaced with such a caution.”

“ I stand corrected, Lord Hartley, and readily agree I have no right to make the enquiries

enquiries which have offended you. The regard I have ever felt for you is the only excuse I have to offer for my impertinent curiosity, I therefore wish your Lordship a very good morning."

"Stop, stop, my good friend, we must not part thus, I am rather hasty, and your caution ruffled my temper; but I will neither allow you to leave me in anger nor in ignorance of where I have been. I accompanied some gentlemen to see a tennis match played between two Germans, renowned for their skill in the game, and one of the balls chancing to take a wrong direction, gave me so severe a pat upon this temple,—putting his hand to the place—it made me stagger, and has, as you perceive, made an impression which authorized me to term it a slight contusion. So now, pray tell me from whom you heard of the accident."

A very well invented fiction, thought
the

the incredulous Ausby, though he could not help observing, according to the side in which he was given to understand the overturned carriage had fallen, the bruise his Lordship had received was on the contrary temple to what he should have expected, except he reflected, which was very possible, he might be sitting backwards when the accident happened.

As he did not immediately speak, and his countenance denoted his incredulity, Ferdinand said rather impatiently, "Do you suppose I wish to impose upon you by a fictitious tale, Mr. Ausby?"

"I hardly know what to think or what to believe, my Lord, only do me the favour to listen to what has occurred to Lady Helen and myself, which may in some respects excuse both my impertinence and my incredulity," repeating in a very few words what the reader is already acquainted with, declaring Elinor's fit was supposed

supposed to originate in her being persuaded he had been killed, and as the footman entertained the same fears, the same astonishing likeness must have deceived them all.

“ Astonishing, indeed ! ” cried Ferdinand : “ however, you may rely upon my honour I have neither been in the Bois de Boulogne, nor in any carriage since I left home this morning to breakfast at the *Café Conti*, where I expected to be joined by Lord Donalbain ; but it will be very easy to learn who this gentleman is you have so often taken for me, by enquiring after him at the *Hotel de Roi* . ”

“ That we can do in the evening , ” said Ausby, once more firmly convinced he had wronged Lord Hartley, which he frankly confessed, requesting his pardon, and that he would reflect he was not the only one that had been led into the same error.

“ I can ”

"I can only say I should, under similar circumstances, have been quite as ready to condemn you, and to prevent Lady Hantley from partaking in the sort of general alarm which has prevailed upon my account."

A few minutes brought them home. As they were hastily crossing the antichamber, Lady Helen's footman exclaimed, "Thank God I was mistaken! or else my Lord Marquis has very soon recovered; and I am sure, if it had been required, I could have taken my bible oath it was him I saw taken out of the overturned coach."

"Indeed! my friend," said Ferdinand, stopping and looking the man in the face, "and was the gentleman you were so certain was me, dressed as I am?"

"I could not see his clothes, my Lord, and I thought it was next to impossible it could have been you, because of the carriage."

The

The gentlemen walked on; the Marquis musing in his turn; while Ausby said, "Your Lordship must be convinced there does exist a very great resemblance between yourself and this stranger."

"I must endeavour to see him," was the reply, as they entered the saloon, where they found the Marchioness, Lady Helen, and the Duke, who had been prevailed upon to quit Flinor's room by a physician, that had been summoned since Ausby had left them, and who had given them the greatest hopes she would very speedily recover her senses.

The unexpected appearance of Ferdinand was much more gratifying at that moment to the distressed Lady Helen than to the Marchioness, who was perfectly unconscious that any fears had been entertained for his safety; which reflection had induced Lady Helen to leave her daughter, lest her first exclamation should reduce

Lady Hartley to a similar situation. The same prudence taught her to conceal her joy at perceiving Ferdinand apparently unhurt, and prevented her from making any inquiries, though she was very impatient to learn whether he had received any material hurt, or whether it was him who had been overturned. She therefore readily retired with her husband, who wished to question the physicians, he said, and who, in a very few words, repeated every thing that had passed between him and Lord Hartley. It was very wonderful so prodigious a likeness should subsist between any two people, they both agreed; though Ausby did not mention his former suspicions of his Lordship, only observed to Lady Helen, he did not care how soon his Grace was upon the road to Scotland. Elinor had opened her eyes, but continued insensible to all around her; with which report Ausby returned into the saloon, where he found Duncan, who was fearful she had received some hurt, as the

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mere fright occasioned by the accident would scarcely have had so great an effect upon her nerves; declaring, when he had any concerns in the legislature, he would bring in a bill to deter fool-hardy coachmen from endangering either their masters or other peoples lives

Ausby took an opportunity, while Duncan was thus exclaiming against coachmen, to hint to Lord Hartley, in whose delicacy he knew he could safely confide, that Lady Helen and himself were alone privy to Elinor's fit having originated in her fears for his life. Ferdinand perfectly understood him; and though he no longer felt any sentiment resembling love for the lovely girl, he sincerely hoped she would soon recover; but upwards of four hours elapsed before she gave any absolute signs of life, and she then looked so wildly round her, that the faculty began to fear a fever, and,

to the infinite sorrow of every individual of the family, before midnight their worst prognostics were completely verified, as she was not only in a high fever, but very delirious; raving incessantly upon the death of Lord Hartley, and weeping for his untimely fate.

In vain Lady Helen tried to calm her agitation, by assuring her no one was hurt; requesting her to compose her spirits, as all the reply she made was, "I saw him; poor Lady Hartley, she will die too, I am sure; she loved him so well."

Thus did she continue to ramble; nor did her mother dare to leave her, lest her female attendants should discover or guess, in what her disorder originated; nor would her ladyship suffer the Marchioness to approach her, appealing to Lord Hartley to second her interdiction, which he did strenuously.

nuously. She very reluctantly gave up the point ; nor was Mrs. Montgomery more indulged, both Ausby and her ladyship being particularly anxious to conceal what they considered a very great weakness in the unfortunate sufferer.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DURING five days, the fears of Lady Helen, the Duke, and Ausby, for Elinor's recovery, rather increased than diminished. Ferdinand was very much hurt when he reflected on what her disorder originated in. He had accompanied Ausby to the Hotel du Roi the morning after the accident, to inquire after his polygraph, ~~as~~ he termed the stranger, when to his apparent astonishment, and Ausby's renewed mistrust, the maîtres of the hotel rejoiced to see him so well recovered, affirming, that the little external injury his temple had sustained was wholly owing to the excellent bathing spirits with which

which she chafed it. In vain did Ferdinand assure her he was not the gentleman who had been brought to her house ; but French-woman like, she declared her regret at being obliged to contradict Monsieur, and persisted in her assertion ; observing, he ought to have given her her lesson, if he wished to have led his companion to believe he was not the person who had been overturned. Either in reality or in appearance, excessively provoked, Ausby could not decide which, Ferdinand demanded, in a very peremptory tone, where the gentlemen she took him for went when he left her house ? She perceived Monsieur was amusing himself at her expence, as he must know he had taken particular care not to put it in her power to answer his question. -

“ Did I then,” asked the more and more provoked Ferdinand, “ since you
 4 will

will have it I was the person, walk or ride from hence?"

"Need I tell Monsieur he sent for a hackney-coach, which he ordered to the Palais Royal; where he went from thence she could not pretend to resolve."

"Well, one more question, my good lady—how was I dressed?"

"A l'Angloise, as you are now, Sir."

"Good; but can't you particularize the colour of my coat, &c.?"

"Monsieur was in a brown frock, black velvet collar, boots, &c."

"Now, if you recollect, Mr. Aufby, I was not in boots yesterday when I returned home, and you saw me before I could have changed my cloaths, and I wore a blue not a brown frock."

"Very true, my Lord; besides, after having pledged your honour you were not the person who met with the accident, I must continue to believe the most extraor-

inary

dinary likeness that ever existed has deceived this good lady, myself, Elinor, and my servant. I can only lay 'tis strange, really passing strange, and wish we could have learnt where this stranger lived."

"So do I, with all my soul," cried Ferdinand, "as I never supposed two separate people could have borne so striking a resemblance to each other." And thus they returned home, neither of them by any means satisfied, as Ausby could not help thinking the Marquis was endeavouring to deceive him, as he might very possibly have changed his dress after his accident before he returned home; and the mistress of the hotel having identified the contusion he said he had received in the tennis-court, put the matter almost beyond a doubt. Meanwhile, be it observed, Lord David and Orlando were among the constant enquirers after the invalid, and not apparently among the least affected by her indisposition, though our veracity forces us

to acknowledge they would have been perfectly resigned, had her illness proved fatal, as they thought they might be gainers, and could not be losers by such an event; but the excellence of her constitution assisting the efforts of the faculty, on the sixth afternoon she recognized her mother, and asked her how she did. After a flood of joyful tears the fond parent pressed her beloved Elinor to her bosom, returning thanks where they were most due, for this first symptom of approaching convalescence.

How are all my friends, my dear mother? I am afraid I have occasioned you much anxiety, and a great deal of trouble."

"Fear not the past, my beloved Elinor, only try to get well as fast as possible. Your grandfather is only anxious for your recovery. Your cousin Duncan is already well."

"But poor Lady Hartley, how is she?"

"In very good health, my dear girl."

Elinor

Elinor looked stedfastly at her mother for several seconds, till the unbidden tears which rolled down her cheeks induced her to hide her face under her bed clothes, more than ever convinced of the error she had committed in suffering an unexperienced girl to form a friendship with a man of Ferdinand's age, and so exactly calculated to make the most favourable impression upon her mind. She made a sign to the attendants to withdraw, and after once more embracing her beloved Elinor, she said, "Why these tears, my dear girl, do they arise from any unpleasant recollections concerning our late accident?" You are well aware how dear the Marquis of Huxley is to us all; and I know you thought it was him who was taken out of the overturned carriage. Fortunately, you were mistaken, as his Lordship is in perfect health; and had not, he told Mr. Aubrey, been out in a carriage that evening; therefore, not to alarm ~~Little~~ Miss Hartley, I have not mentioned

mentioned your apprehensions for his safety, which were very natural to any one."

Elinor listened very attentively, then starting up, she looked wildly round her, putting her hand to her forehead, till after a few moment's pause, she exclaimed, "Oh, no, he cannot be so soon recovered, I am sure; I saw him taken out all over blood, and if not dead, in a dying condition, and the thoughts of what poor Lady Hartley would suffer made me quite ill."

"I am sensible of the regard you bear that amiable woman, who well deserves your esteem; but it really was not Lord Hartley that you saw, as I give you my honour he is now in the saloon with his wife, and in as good health as ever he was in his life."

"I am very happy to hear it for the Marchioness's sake, for I dare say, had he been hurt, it would have occasioned her death," sighing as she concluded, and once more laying down. A short silence ensued,
which

which she broke by inquiring who the gentlemen was that had been so much hurt.

“ He was a stranger, Mr. Ausby was informed, my dear girl ; but even he was not near so much hurt as you apprehended, as he left the Hotel du Roi, where he was carried, very soon after he recovered his senses, having been merely stunned by the falling of his carriage.”

“ Well, I am glad to hear he so soon recovered ; I only wonder how I could possibly take him for Lord Hartley. How long is it since it happened ? I can feel I have been ill, and know I have had strange thoughts and dreams ; but perhaps you tell me the Marquis is well that I may not grieve for his death. Though why should I regret him more than any other friend ? The seeing him all over blood was what most terrified me ; but I grieved more for Lady Hartley than for him, because I have
heard

heard her say she could not survive his loss."

"Shall I ask the Marquis to pay you a visit, since you won't believe my assertions respecting his health?"

"Oh, no, my dear mama, I am convinced you would not deceive me; and if I see Lady Hartley in good spirits, and not in mourning, I shall be convinced her beloved Ferdinand is alive and well."

"Then you shall soon be satisfied," replied the mother, recalling the attendants, and sending for Ausby, she imparted to him every thing that had passed between her and the incredulous Elinor.

"She shall see the Marquis," said he, "that will effect her cure I hope; and I will advise his accompanying his wife into her room, lest her Ladyship should be too much affected by the altered appearance of her young friend." And thus it was managed.

managed very much to Elinor's satisfaction, who was soon pronounced to be in a state of convalescence. Still she did not gain strength so fast as her mother had hoped and expected; the idea of the approaching separation did not accelerate her recovery, and Mr Cameron's violent professions of love, which he chose just at this juncture to renew, were very ill received. Her dejection was wholly attributed to the languor attendant upon invalids.

Ferdinand continued to treat her as he would have done a sister, but took every opportunity to convince her his heart was in the keeping of Lady Hartley, whom it was evident even to Austen he loved with the most tender affection. Then could he have any other attachment? as the more he was off his guard, the more he discovered the sincere affection he now bore his wife, which certainly by no means accorded with those suspicions he continued to entertain

tain of his being the very person that had been overturned in the Carrousel, as so many people besides himself could not have been mistaken with respect to his person, or deceived by a mere likeness in point of features; and Elinor's illness was a too convincing proof how firmly she had believed the supposed stranger and the Marquis were one and the same person.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ELINOR being perfectly recovered, the Duke fixed the first Monday in February for their departure from Paris ; the Marquis and Marchioness having agreed to set out for Italy with Duncan, Lord David, his son, and Ausby, on the same day.

On the preceding Saturday they all dined at the Duke's, and were talking over their impending journey, after the cloth had been removed, when the Marquis's valet brought him a note, saying, as he put it into his Lordship's hands, " A servant waits for an answer."

" Then.

“ Then, do you wait till I see whether it requires one,” was the reply.

Ferdinand requested permission to read his letter, and appeared much surprized by the contents. Ausby, who very narrowly watched his countenance, began to suspect it came from the favourite sultana, whose acquaintance he was so unwilling to acknowledge ; indeed, his colour varied so often while he was reading not more than five lines, an indifferent spectator, who had observed him, must have been convinced, like Ausby, that they contained some very unexpected intelligence, particularly as that gentleman had frequently had occasion to remark, his Lordship had the greatest command over his countenance.

Having a second time perused the note, Ferdinand, who had approached one of the windows, to enjoy a better light, remained in a musing posture for a few seconds, then
tearing

tearing off a slip of the paper, he wrote a very few words with his pen, which he put into his wife's hand, informing the Duke he must request leave of absence for an hour or perhaps more, and immediately left the room.

Impelled by a curiosity every recent circumstance greatly increased, Aubrey resolved, if possible, to watch where his Lordship went; he therefore, in a very few seconds, followed him out of the saloon, just in time to see him, followed by his valet, hastening down stairs; with rather more deliberation he pursued their steps, and saw him from a window in the entrance hall. Speaking to a strange servant, whose great coat concealed his livery, and who came out of the Porter's lodge.

Aubrey could not help fancying, though they were quite at the extremity of the court, and the moon did not shine with
very

very great lustre, that he recognized in the servant the features of the coachman, who had occasioned the accident, which had so nearly led to a discovery of his master's intrigues. This bare surmise strengthened his resolution of following the Marquis, who, after conferring for a short time with the supposed coachman, left the hotel, attended by him alone ; his valet taking the contrary direction, which led to the hotel they inhabited.

Ausby kept to his purpose, though he particularly wished to escape their observation ; he therefore followed at a very respectable distance, keeping as much as possible under the shade of the houses, merely wishing to have them in view. They directed their steps towards the old Boulevard's : the evening was very cold, and the Marquis had been in too great haste to take the same precaution the messenger had done, nor had Ausby time to think of his great

great coat, he was therefore not sorry the quickness of their pace obliged him to bustle along pretty fast, resolved as he was not to lose sight of them if he could possibly avoid it, not doubting but the note came from the fair inhabitant of the Boulogne villa, else he would certainly have entered into some explanation to the Duke, or have ordered his carriage at such a time of night, particularly at Paris, where it was totally contrary to etiquette to pay a visit on foot at any hour. Then he reflected it was not impossible he might have an equipage in waiting, as he certainly kept one for this favourite lady.

During his reflections, they reached what was then denominated the Beau Boulevard; but he saw no coach, which he fully expected would have been stationed there; he therefore continued in their fear, escaping notice, by keeping on the shady side of the trees; and there being a good deal of company walking to and fro, going or coming

ing from the various little theatres in that neighbourhood, was all in his favour. He soon, however, began to apprehend the Marquis might be going, late as it was, on foot to Boulogne, and he did not enjoy the thoughts of following him thither, anxious as he was to discover where he was going ; at all events he was resolved to keep him in sight till they reached some of the gates or barriers, which he did not feel himself inclined to pass, convinced he could not this time be mistaken as to who he was watching.

He had scarcely come to this determination, before the servant, who was following Ferdinand, hastily advanced, and addressed him, hat in hand, but in too low a voice for Ausby to understand what he said. The Marquis listened attentively, and in a few seconds, in consequence of this information, Ausby presumed, stopped at the corner of a most elegant pavilion, which overlooked

overlooked these delightful walks, which then enriched Paris, and which stood in the corner of a very extensive garden, belonging to a most magnificent hotel, that, tho' from a greater distance, commanded the same prospect.

The servant having either knocked or made some private signal, a small Venetian door, leading into the garden, was almost instantly opened. Ausby sprung forward under the shade of the trees, but was too late to see who it was closed the door upon the Marquis, the moment he entered ; but perceiving lights moving to and fro in the pavilion, his eyes were directed thither. Unfortunately, as he thought, the Venetian blinds were down, and the windows were too high for him to see into them from the ground ; but, favoured by some iron rails, which at any other time he would have attempted to mount, he scrambled up as quick as possible, and was just in time

to perceive the Marquis thickening his embrace, as if merely to be a second time enfolded in the arms of an elegant female whose back being towards him he could not discern her features, nor be at any certainty whether she was old or young, handsome, or the reverse : he merely remarked, she was a very fine figure. He intended however, to have had a better view of her before he quitted his elevated station if he had not been attacked by the passing pedestrians, who, thinking he had no business to be thus exalted, made him descend even more hastily than he had mounted the rails : indeed, he would in all likelihood have been carried before the nearest commissary by some of the people, who knew to whom the pavilion and gardens belonged, if he had not told them he had merely ascended the rails in fun, a friend of his having just entered by the private door, and shut him out purposely to make him go round, and he wished to avoid

avoid taking that trouble. His dress and manners corresponding with his tale, he was suffered to depart unmolested, and thought he had, perhaps, upon the whole, been rather fortunate, as he had it in contemplation to rap at the window at the moment he was rather peremptorily ordered to quit his station. He was, however, by no means satisfied with what he had seen, though he found it necessary to appear to be going round towards the front of the hotel, to avoid exciting any further suspicion. He therefore turned down the first street, where he waited for a few minutes, and then returned to the spot he had so recently quitted; but all was quiet within the pavilion, and not a light was to be seen; he crept close under the wall (not daring to mount the rails to take another peep) in hopes of hearing Lord Hartley's voice, but all was silent as the grave; he was therefore convinced the lady, and her apparently beloved admirer, had quitted

the pavilion, which he had often admired, as well as the magnificent hotel to which it appertained, and the elegantly decorated garden in which it stood, but had never happened either to hear or to enquire to whom it belonged. He was determined, however, to be satisfied in this respect before he returned home. French ladies of distinction are frequently engaged in intrigues he had been told. The Marquis had spent some time in Paris when upon the grand tour, and this might be a former favourite with whom he had renewed his acquaintance. Indeed this was the most favourable construction he could put upon what he had seen; his former suspicions were immediately removed, as he was convinced a woman of less consequence could facilitate all his measures to avoid a discovery, and doubtless provided him with the carriage in which he was returned, and with the disguise he assumed when he visited her, as secret must be his relations with her.

as to him : he therefore only wished now to learn whether she was a wife, a maid, a widow, or the nobleman's mistress who owned the pavilion. If he put any faith in what the gardener had told him, she was the latter. Resolved to be rather more *au fait* of this mysterious amour, he walked round into the *Rue neuve St. Augustine*, which the hotel fronted, and having reached the great gates, which led into a spacious court-yard, he perceived several servants in very rich liveries standing at them, engaged in deep discourse with the porter, a grave looking Swiss. He stopped, affecting to have lost himself, and enquired of the Helvetian orator his nearest way to the *Rue de Richelieu*? With that good-humour for which his nation is proverbial, the honest Swiss undertook to direct him, which he did so plainly and so politely, that Ausby thanked him with equal civility, and then said, " Pray to whom does this superb hotel belong?—Excuse the question ;

question ; but I am almost a stranger in Paris, where I think I have not seen a more noble building."

"It is generally allowed to be one of the finest hotels in the city," was the reply, with an air of self-satisfaction, "and belongs to the Prince de Montbazom, at whose gate I have been stationary these fourteen years."

Ausby was in hopes of gaining all the information he could desire from this civil Swiss, but he was at that moment called away, and having no pretence to wait his return, he was obliged to walk forward according to the direction he had received. Certainly, he reflected, a man of such rank would never connive at any intrigue being carried on under his roof. No; it must be as he had before conjectured—his mistress, with whom the Marquis was connected. He had most likely sent for her to Paris, and she had taken this opportunity

nity of seeing her favourite admirer, who was certainly rather unexpectedly summoned. He next wondered whether the Prince was a young or an old man, married or single, and wished he could be satisfied before he returned home, which he was anxious to do as speedily as possible, lest his absence should be remarked, or the Marquis should return before him, who would immediately suspect he had been watching him, if he learnt he had left the hotel nearly at the same time he did; he would have given a trifle to have known the purport of the few words he had wrote with his pencil, and given to his wife. He was proceeding, undecided how to act or how to obtain the satisfaction he required, when in turning the corner of the Rue de Clery, a gentleman, even in greater haste than the Marquis had been, ran against him, and made him stagger again. He fell upon his right, which was nearly at the same instant opened.

opened by a very smart young woman, saying, "Pray walk in, Sir." He was beginning to apologize, when several articles in the millinery line caught his attention; and he reflected, that by expending a trifle on some of these fashionable gewgaws, he might learn, if not all, at least a part of what he was so anxious to know. At a loss what to purchase, he asked to look at some black lace, which he knew was always an acceptable present to a lady; and while inspecting the contents of her hand-boxes, he entered into conversation with the mistress of the shop, who possessed all the volubility of her nation, and knew but every thing and every body, assisting him she had the honour of decorating the persons of most of the English ladies of distinction then in Paris.

Ausby professed by the hint, observing, he had heard her name very highly spoken of by the Marchioness of Hazley, which

was

was what had induced him to visit her shop, which he had not been able to find till it had been pointed out to him by the Swiss at the large hotel just above.

“ The hotel de Montbazon, Monsieur meins, belonging to the Marechal Prince of that name. I have the honour of serving that noble family with every article in my line, and his household are always very happy whenever they have it in their power to recommend me.”

Ausby thought himself greatly indebted to Dame Fortune for having thrown him in this talkative lady's way, and carelessly enquired whether the Prince was young or old ?

“ Between sixty and seventy,” she replied, “ and one of the first noblemen in the kingdom, a Marechal of France, a Knight of the Holy Ghost and St. Louis ;

besides many foreign orders, and as rich as the great Mr. Beaujeon "

" Has he many children ?" rejoined the inquisitive Ausby.

" One daughter only, who is married to a Spanish grandee, a distant relation of the Prince's, I believe, and who is ambassador at our Court, the Duke d'Almanza, and he has only one daughter, which is peculiarly unfortunate, as, no doubt, both the Marshal Prince and his Excellency wished for male heirs to perpetuate their name, and inherit their titles."

" Very true, Mi'am," said Ausby:—

" Is the Duke d'Almanza's daughter in France ?"

" Oh dear, yes, Sir, the Duchess could not bear to lose sight of her for any length of time; but as she is of a very delicate constitution, they are fearful the air of the capital is not sufficiently salubrious for her tender frame; she therefore generally resides at a small villa the Prince has lately purchased,

purchased, either at Boulogne or St. Cloud, I am not positive which ; I only know she generally rides on horseback of a morning, in the Bois de Boulogne, for her health, and very seldom if ever sleeps in Paris. I make up all her millinery, and find it as great a pleasure as profit to endeavour to embellish one of the most beautiful young creatures I think I ever beheld !”

Was it possible, Ausby thought, the Marquis could intrigue with a young woman of such rank and expectations !—Yet the gardener had told him the ladies who inhabited the villa were Spanish : altogether it was the most extraordinary affair he had ever heard of, as the more he endeavoured to elucidate the mystery the less satisfaction he obtained. The Prince de Montbazou, and the Duke d’Almanza must know Lord Hartley was married, therefore could they suffer him clandestinely

tinely to visit the sole heiress of their honours and fortune?

During these reflections he paid for his lace, and left the shop, hardly more satisfied than when first he entered. Was it with the Duchess the Marquis intrigued, or had the handsome young Spanish lady no opportunity of seeing him privately?—that he might have turned her head was very possible; he only wondered where they had first met, and whether she knew of his other engagements. Was it her who had enfolded him in her arms in the pavilion?—then how dare they risk a meeting in her grandfather's house!—altogether it was beyond his comprehension.

When he reached home he asked the porter if the Marquis of Hartley was returned, and was answered in the negative. He was not sorry, as he thought he should
be

be much less at a loss to account for his absence, but to his great joy he found the company merely supposed he had been in his own room, and he did not think it necessary to undeceive them. No explanation had taken place he found as to where the Marquis was gone: indeed, the Marchioness's excellent spirits were a convincing proof she little thought what a tender reception he had met with from the person he had gone to visit, and he fervently prayed she might ever remain in her then happy ignorance.

They were just set down to tea, which Lady Helen, to oblige the Duke, always made, when a note was brought to the Marchioness, which she read with evident satisfaction not unmixed with surprise: she then informed the Duke, that the Marquis hoped he would excuse his not returning to supper, some friends having rather unexpectedly arrived in Paris, to whom he

was obliged to dedicate the evening. No questions were of course asked, though the Duke and Lord David expressed their regret, nor did Duncan submit very patiently to what he considered a very great disappointment, and rather reluctantly agreed to take a stroll with his cousin in the Palais Royal, alledging that he never enjoyed himself so much as in Lord Hartley's company.

It was midnight before the Marchioness talked of departing, Ausby having contrived to keep her there as late as was consistent with the Duke's partiality to early hours, in the hope that the Marquis, not finding her at home when he returned, might come in search of her, and think it necessary to say where he had spent the evening; but being disappointed in his expectations, he therefore, as a last resource, chose to attend her home, although Duncan, who retained the title of her cicisbeo, rendered

rendered his protection unnecessary ; nor was his curiosity at all gratified, as the Marquis had not yet arrived.

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As the Marchioness, on reaching home, talked of retiring immediately, Ausby was reluctantly compelled to bid her a good-evening, and to retire in more perplexity than ever, and at a loss to decide whether he ought or ought not to suffer Duncan to remain upon such an intimate footing with his once and even now favourite Marquis of Hartley, whom he could not still help thinking might, if he chose, be able honourably to elucidate those mysteries he had hitherto so vainly attempted to fathom.

 CHAP. XXXV.

THE following morning, Ausby, who was still bewildered in his own conjectures, sallied forth as soon as he had breakfasted, to reconnoitre the pavilion and the Hotel de Montbazou by day-light. He was not, however, enabled to make any discovery likely to gratify his inordinate curiosity; he merely remarked the very opposite house to the Prince's was kept by a *restorateur*, where, by ordering a dinner, as they are a sort of taverns, he might command a window, from whence he could see whoever went in or out of the Hotel de Montbazou. Still he did not foresee that this expedient would answer the desired end, as
 the

the Marquis's visits were evidently of a private nature, and he would very probably never enter the Hotel during the two days they intended to remain in Paris ; but when he returned home he became of a different opinion : The Marquis and Marchioness were both there, and in very high spirits.

Before they took their leave the Duke pressed them to dine with him *en famille*, observing that he was anxious to engross as much as possible of their company. The Marquis pleaded a pre-engagement which he had made the preceding evening ; but the Marchioness readily accepted the invitation, promising to bring Mrs. Montgomery.

The moment they were gone, Ausby became very anxious to know whether Ferdinand was actually going to dine at the Prince de Montbazan's ; he therefore pretended

tended to recollect having made a hitherto promise to dine with the Principal of the Scotch College, which, as the Duke had company, he should keep; promising to return early in the evening. He had, however, having declared their intention of taking a view of the Palais Royal when ultimately it being very uncertain whether the Marquis would join them before supper.

About one o'clock, therefore, he proceeded to the *reservoir's* which he had remarked in the morning; where he easily procured a front upper room, and having ordered his dinner, took out a book he had purposely brought to beguile the time, but to which he paid but little attention, to intent was he upon watching every soul who entered or who left the Hotel de Mombazon.

The clock was striking two when Austley was gratified with the sight of Lord Hartley:

ley's carriage, in which he perceived his Lordship in his full-dressed regimentals, who had seldom, he thought, looked better. The coach turned into the court, which being only railed in from the street, he saw his Lordship alight at the grand entrance, and could not help remarking that he held his hat as if he rather wished to conceal his face from the Prince's servants; at least such was the construction Aubrey put upon what he afterwards reflected might be the effect of accident, or meant to guard his eyes from the sun. The moment he had alighted the coachman drove out of the court, nor did the footman, notwithstanding it was even more customary in France than in England for every guest to be attended by their own servant, remain behind, as he followed the carriage, and then mounting the box, was soon out of sight.

Early as the French nobility always dine, when compared to English hours, Ausby thought it could not be near his dinner-time, and was confirmed in his conjecture by perceiving many of the servants hanging about the door. He kept his eyes fixed upon the windows of the house; but perceiving no one moving in the apartments that overlooked the court, he presumed the reception rooms were towards the Boulevards. No other company followed the Marquis, which increased his astonishment. Could he be gone to dine *tête-à-tête* with the young Spaniard? that was next to impossible, as he certainly would not, in that case, have chosen to have made his *entrée* thus publicly, when he could have been so easily admitted through the private door. He had ordered his own dinner at three, and about half after he judged the Prince de Montbazou would sit down to him; by the bustle he perceived upon the great stair-case, and the running up and down of the

the

the servants, which continued till near five, when all appeared once more quiet.

He now began to think of returning home, where he had promised to drink his tea, intending to take the tour of the Boulevards, as he thought it not impossible that the party were assembled in the pavilion—he therefore rung to know what he had to pay, and the waiter had just made his appearance, when a most elegant chariot and six, the blinds of which were up, drove into the court he had been so anxiously watching, and stopped at the grand entrance.

“To whom, my friend, does that carriage belong?” he eagerly demanded.

“To the Spanish Ambassador,” was the reply, immediately leaving the room in haste, as it was a busy day, to fetch his bill.

“The Princess’s son-in-law,” thought Ausby, “when did he come?” for the
chariot

chariot was evidently waiting to take up. It was however obvious that the Marquis had not, as he once thought, been favoured with a *tête à-tête* with the fair daughter of his Grace; and that he or the Prince could suffer him to visit as her lover was impossible. But then, perhaps, she was not there; her mother might be the object of the Marquis's affection; they might be going into the country together, as it was possible neither the Prince nor the Duke were at home.

While he was thus busied in conjecture, a gentleman appeared upon the steps, dressed as if going to Versailles. The grand order of Calatrava glittered in immense diamonds upon his breast, which convinced Ausby it was the Duke d'Almanza, and he could not help thinking he had seen him somewhere before, but where he could not recollect. He appeared to be about five and forty, and was certainly a very striking figure,

figure, perfectly calculated to represent his Most Catholic Majesty.

While Ausby was endeavouring to recollect where he had seen the Ambassador before, to his infinite surprise the Marquis of Hartley, dressed in the most elegant as well as expensive suit of embroidery he thought he had ever seen, which was equally decorated with the grand order the Ambassador wore, also in jewels, joined him upon the steps. His hair was quite differently arranged to what it was when he entered the Hotel; indeed, his appearance was so much altered in every respect, that if Ausby had not seen him alight at the Prince's, he should hardly have known him again, though he thought he had never seen a more elegant figure. The Ambassador preceded him into the carriage, which, as soon as they had taken their seats, drove off full speed, with four footmen in rich Spanish liveries exalted behind.

Fearful

Fearful of being seen, Ausby retreated from his window, but had a second and still better view of the two gentlemen, as the chariot turned out of the court, Lord Hartley having leant forward to draw up his front glass.—“Well! this is more wonderful than any metamorphosis of his Lordship I have ever yet witnessed,” he mentally ejaculated:—Can an officer in our guards be a knight of Calatrava! Altogether it was beyond his comprehension.

Scarcely knowing what he was about, Ausby paid his bill and set out home, one moment thinking the Marquis was employed in some secret negotiation for the Court of Great Britain; the next, that he had led the Duke d’Almanza to believe he was single, and who had, in consequence of his intended marriage with his daughter, decorated him, with his Sovereign’s permission, with the noble order he wore; yet he could not suppose a man of Lord Hartley’s

ley's superior understanding would have recourse to so mean a subterfuge to obtain any such honorary distinction; nor could he help thinking, so high an opinion he still continued to entertain of Lord Hartley's morals, that if seriously called upon, he would be able to answer for those very mysteries which had so much puzzled him to fathom. As it would be absurd to suppose that men of the Duke d'Almanza's or the Prince de Montbazan's consequence were likely to engage in any scheme which might injure either their honour or their reputation; he therefore resolved never to mention what he had seen, nor his suppositions in consequence, trusting in due time that every present seeming mystery would be properly elucidated.

In a far better humour than he left home, and much more satisfied in his own mind, though still more perplexed than he would have chosen to acknowledge, he reached his

his hotel, and found the Marchioness in such excellent spirits, rallying Duncan, whom she protested should continue her cicisbeo during her Italian tour, such attendants being particularly required there, which convinced him she was privy to those secrets he had so meanly, (for he was ever ready to acknowledge his errors) endeavoured to fathom; for although the Marquis's name was mentioned several times during tea, she never mentioned where he was gone, nor whether she expected him home before or after supper.

The Duke did once ask, whether they were English friends who had deprived them of the pleasure of his company.—The Marchioness, in reply, declared she hardly knew.

Duncan, who did not think his favourite friend's absence very satisfactorily accounted for with his usual bluntness, wished he might

might have an equally incurious wife when he married ; observing that old Price had told him he had remained a bachelor, that he might be able to go and come without accounting for his actions to a woman.

Lady Hartley merely smiled, and almost immediately changed the discourse, by regretting that she was so soon to be separated from Lady Helen, and the once lively Elinor, whose gravity was still attributed to a sort of nervous fever which hung about her.

Between nine and ten the Marquis of Hartley joined them, dressed exactly as when Aubrey had seen him alight at the Prince de Montbazon's : He was remarkably gay, and soon said he hoped the Duke would not think of quitting Paris till Wednesday, as he had been obliged to promise both the Marchioness and himself would spend the following day with those friends with whom he had spent the preceding evening and

that day, and he should feel himself quite hurt if he did not enjoy the Duke's, Lady Helen's, and Miss Melrose's company for one whole day before they parted. He therefore hoped they would dine and sup with him and Lady Hartley on the Tuesday, when he should also invite Lord David and Mr. Cameron, whom he hoped would not find it inconvenient to postpone their departure for one day; if they did, he must follow, instead of accompanying them; that would make all the difference.

"Hang me, if I sit without you," cried Duncan.

"I was convinced you would not have been so ungallant," rejoined the Marchioness, who made no remarks respecting the friends she was to meet the next day, which convinced Aubrey she fully expected the invitation she had received.

The Duke, who was almost as unwilling to part from Ferdinand as his beloved Duncan, readily agreed to postpone his departure, which appeared a sort of reprieve to Helen, who silently contemplated with a delight bordering on anguish the animated countenance of the elegant Hartley, whom she had never before seen in regimentals, consequently never to so great an advantage.

The Duke wished he was ten years younger, that he might have accompanied them into Italy; and hoped the Marquis of Hartley would spend his Christmas at Orkney castle.

"We will endeavour to profit by your kind invitation, but can't make an absolute promise," said Ferdinand; "her Ladyship had agreed to correspond with Elinor, which in some measure comforted her for the approaching separation."

As no more was said respecting Lord and Lady Hartley's invitation for the next day, Ausby presumed they rather wished to keep their acquaintance with the Prince de Montbazon a secret, which might account for the strange metamorphosis the Marquis had undergone in his hotel; though he was as much as ever at a loss to guess what end it was to answer. Surely his Lordship could not wish to pass for a Spaniard, either at Versailles or elsewhere; besides, he had been there, and visited most of the first nobility as an Englishman; how then could he expect to deceive them into a belief that he was a Spaniard.

As no satisfactory solution offered itself to this mystery, and he could not venture to ask any questions, he was obliged to content himself with thinking it very strange and very inexplicable.

Early the next morning Ferdinand waited upon Lord David, who readily agreed to postpone his departure till the Wednesday, and soon after waited upon the Duke to make a merit of his complaisance; alledging his wish to oblige Lord Hartley could alone have induced him to put off his journey, as it was more than time that he was upon the road.

"Why then you had better take the lead of us, uncle," said the frank spoken Duncan: "I am sure Lord Hartley is not conscious that his request has put you to any inconvenience, as he is by no means fond of laying himself under unnecessary obligations."

Lord David instantly altered his tone, requesting his nephew would not give the Marquis the least reason to suppose he had felt any reluctance to comply with his proposal, declaring his chief pleasure was to

render every thing agreeable to his friends, and there was no one for whom he had so great an esteem as for Lord Hartley.

Duncan said no more ; and Ausby proposed a walk to him, wishing to discover whether he knew where his favourite friend was engaged to dinner, but found himself baffled in every attempt to fathom the mystery which so much perplexed him, as Lord Donalduin either was not, or would not acknowledge he was in any of the Marquis's secrets.

During their absence, Lady Helen and her daughter had been to call upon the Marchioness, and told Ausby they had never seen her look half so well, nor indeed half so much dressed, therefore rather wondered where she was going, as neither she nor the Marquis had mentioned ; which, considering the intimate terms they were upon, rather astonished them.

Ausby

Ausby made no remarks, but resolved to know whether they were going to the Hotel de Montbazou; he therefore strolled to the *Restaurateur's*, where, while eating a portion of soup, he had the satisfaction to see both Lord and Lady Hartley set down at the Prince's door, who, as far as he was able to judge, received them in the hall, and appeared, from what he could discern, to give them a far more friendly than ceremonious reception.

The carriage and footmen were immediately dismissed, as they had been the day before; and as, after waiting an hour, no other company made their appearance, Ausby returned home, fully convinced Lady Hardy was in all her husband's secrets, though of what nature they were he could not divine.

Upon enquiry he understood they did not return home till between one and two

in the morning. Still restrained, as he was, from making any further enquiries, he was obliged to remain in ignorance, merely hoping he should some time or other learn why the Marquis had assumed the order of Calatrava, and why he thought it necessary to make a mystery of visiting one of the first noblemen in France.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE time for their departure at length arrived. The Duke was closeted for near an hour with his grandson on the morning they were to leave Paris, and gave him such excellent advice, and such strong proofs of his regard, that Duncan protested to his uncle Ausby that he was near snivelling like a school-boy, when they separated; but he was resolved to deserve such continued marks of his grandfather's affection: The Duke, on his part, was very much flattered by the sensibility the young rustic displayed, and prognosticated to his son-in-law, that the Marquis of Donalbain, would be as good, if not so shining a character, as Lord Hartley, from whom he parted

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with

with infinite regret ; which was not lessened by perceiving it was mutual, and that the elegant Ferdinand received with far more sensibility and deference the parting blessing he bestowed on him in common with his grandson, than Duncan, much less Orlando evinced.

Elinor tried in vain to conceal her tears, which she attributed to her sorrow at parting from Lady Hartley, her much esteemed father-in-law, and her cousin Duncan, not professing a regret she did not feel at quitting Lord David, and his affected son ; while she scarcely durst venture to articulate her final adieu to Ferdinand, who by no means appeared to consider himself among those she seemed so unwilling to part from, delicately promising to pay the utmost attention to Mr. Ausby and her cousin Duncan, and to make the latter keep a journal for her future amusement.

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The good-natured Donalbain readily agreed to the notion, wishing she was going along with them, as he never liked taking a long leave of a pretty girl.—Everything being ready, the Duke, Lady Helen, and Elinor, stepped into their travelling carriage, and followed by the sincere good wishes of those they left behind, (but among whom we do not pretend to class Lord David and Mr. Cameron, who, we must acknowledge, cared very little whether they reached England in safety, or even at all) they set out for Calais.

It having been agreed that Ausby, Lord David, Duncan, and Mr. Cameron should take it in turns to occupy the vacant seat in Lord Hartley's coach, Lord David left Paris with them; the three other gentlemen following in a very handsome post-chaise the Duke had presented to his grandson, their suit bringing up the rear.

Orlando appeared particularly anxious to render himself agreeable to his dear cousin, whom he made a point of never contradicting, and seemed, Ausby thought, very emulous to rival the Marquis of Hartley in his good graces, though he took a very different method to obtain his friendship, a Ferdinand never flattered his young friend, and Orlando seldom addressed his dear cousin, but to express his approbation of what he said, or his astonishment at the excellent remarks he made.

' They had not proceeded more than a league upon their journey before Mr. Cameron informed his travelling companions in strict confidence, that his father had, since their arrival in Paris, received a promise from Ministers, that he, Orlando, should be nominated Public Secretary to the Viscount Mildenhall, whom it was expected would shortly succeed the present Ambassador at the court of Turin ; he therefore had every reason

reason to suppose he should soon obtain as honourable, and perhaps more advantageous situation than his father held.

Duncan gave him joy of his happy prospects ; and Aufby did not think it at all impossible that he should see him one day in the ministry. " It was what he both hoped and expected," the silly being replied.

" Well, when you are at the head of affairs," said Duncan, " I only hope you will remember your less fortunate relations."

" Nothing would contribute so much to my happiness, as to be able to promote the felicity of his dear cousin."

" If you live to possess the means," replied the laughing Aufby, who was not sorry when he was summoned to change places with Lord David, whom he could not help remarking that both Lord and Lady Hartley appeared to treat with the most distant, though the most exact politeness. As nothing had of late occurred, he
thought,

thought, to lower him in their esteem, he therefore attributed their increasing reserve to his Lordship's increasing adulation, who seemed to advance in proportion as Ferdinand shrank from his friendship, who, very frequently, under pretence of affording Lady Hartley and her friend a better view of the country, accompanied them in the post-chaise, by which means, if he did not enjoy the pleasure of either Ausby or Duncan's company, he was relieved from that of Lord David and his son, and sometimes both Duncan and himself rode on horseback, to enjoy both the air and the prospects, - which they always took care to point out to Lady Hartley, who gave so decided a preference to the post-chaise, that she seldom, or ever travelled in the coach.

A moment occurred during their journey, except a few delays upon the road, occasioned by the number of horses they required, and which were seldom to be procured,

procured, where the postmasters also kept inns, a manœuvre that generally obliged the traveller either to dine, sup, or sleep at their respective houses.

At Dijon they spent a whole day, and two more at Lyons, from whence they proceeded through Avignon to Antibes, where they embarked on board a felucca for Leghorn, which they reached in perfect safety, and after a short stay proceeded to Florence.

From the moment they landed in Italy, Orlando was, as Duncan remarked, truly in his element, continually pointing out every thing worthy notice or admiration, to the travellers, and as constantly expatiating upon the salubrity of the climate, the excellence of the provisions, &c. &c. Duncan, on the contrary, judging every thing after the English standard, found little, besides the prospects, to admire, particularly
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as his favourite friend by no means partook of his cousin's enthusiasm, it being, as we have already hinted, one of Lord Hartley's failings to be prejudiced against every thing foreign, though few men were better judges or greater admirers of those fine collections of statues and paintings so frequently met with in Italy.

Lady Hartley also saw with his eyes, therefore, though she saw much to praise, she found more to criticise, and gave the most decided preference to England; nor would she allow the Italian peasants, notwithstanding the warmth of their climate, and the almost spontaneous growth of their fruits, to be so happy as the English labourers.

"Then their inns, and their *anguilla de terra*," Duncan observed, "which they presented as a luxury, what had his cousin to say in praise of them?"

"Why, the natives of the country were
accus-

accustomed to the inconvenience of the one, and partial to the taste of the other; he might as well condemn the French for eating frogs."

"Why, they may do so," was the reply, "but I will swear I never saw any while I was there; but here you can get nothing but these d—d snakes, which they misname earth eels, which may suit your taste as well as this warm climate suits your constitution; but I don't like the one, and should prefer the Highlands in the depth of winter to the warm Italian summers, which would soon make me as lank as a greyhound; added to the bad living, for I begin to long for a few good joints already, and expect to be half famished before I quit this classic land, as you term it: besides, though no man is more capable of enjoying all these beauties you so scientifically describe, nor better read in the Greek and Latin authors, Lord Hartley gives the preference to old England, and so shall I as long as I live."

Lord

Lord David was convinced his nephew would like Florence, where he promised his table should always be supplied with the very best provisions, and thither they soon arrived. Lord and Lady Hartley and Mrs. Montgomery took up their abode at a delightful villa on the banks of the Arno, in the immediate vicinity of the town. Duncan and Ausby took up theirs in a very good suite of apartments, which had been engaged for them by their banker previous to their arrival. His Grace having particularly desired they would not become inhabitants of his son's hotel, who certainly lived in a far more splendid style, and was much better lodged than they had expected to have found him. The Marquis of Hartley made the remark to Ausby, who presumed he was anxious to make up in point of shew, for his deficiencies in point of talents. Nor did Lord David fail to assemble all his Italian friends to welcome the two strangers to

to Florence. Lord Hartley had letters of recommendation to most of the first families in Florence, who more than vied with the Envoy in rendering him every politeness in their power, though both him and the Marchioness lived much more retired than they had done at Paris, generally exploring the beautiful romantic environs of the city *tête-à-tête*, and chiefly spending their evenings at home, except Ausby or Duncan, who were ever most welcome visitors, joined their family party, and slept at their villa. Mr Cameron was therefore Duncan's most constant Cicerone, but unable to inspire him with the same liking for statues and pictures which he affected to feel, he introduced him to several celebrated courtezans, where he assured him the first nobility frequently resorted; in short, had Duncan been of as frivolous and dissipated a turn as his cousin, the company he introduced him to under pretence of amusing him would soon have undermined his principles, and rendered

dered him as complete a rake as the effeminate Orlando, who had adopted all the vices peculiar to the country, in addition to those originating in his own disposition. —One evening, as the two cousins were returning from a ramble, a very handsome English travelling post-coach and post-chaise, &c. passed them as they were entering the town. “Who have we got here,” cried Orlando, “countrymen and women it should appear, who will in course pay their respects to my father should they make any stay.”

Duncan was too much taken up with a young lady, who having caught sight of him, seemed to be communicating the discovery she had made to her companions in the coach to attend to his cousin. “Surely,” he exclaimed, “I know that face.”

“Very possibly,” said Orlando, “it struck me as being very handsome.”

“I must be satisfied,” was the reply, quickening

quickenings his pace ; “ where are they going, do you think ? ”

“ To the — hotel, I dare say, and came last from Rome. I should suppose they are most likely on their return to England.”

“ But who do you imagine they are ? ”

“ Had I remarked the arms upon the carriage I should have discovered whether they were people of any rank ; they seem so by their style of travelling.”

“ I never made any study of heraldry,” rejoined Duncan. “ Well, but if you are anxious to have a nearer survey of them, this street will take us directly to the hotel, where I am convinced they will stop, and if we go into the court, we may see them alight.”

“ Won’t it appear rude ? ” asked Duncan.

“ Pho, nonsense ! we are privileged people, you know. What Italian plebeian dare censure my actions ? Besides, we shall flatter our countrywomen by appearing curious

ous to take a nearer survey of them; to come along."

Duncan made no farther objections, and they arrived just in time to see the whole party alight. A young man, about Duncan's age, jumped out first, and was followed by a stout elderly gentleman, who handed out a lady that appeared to be his wife, and lastly the young lady Duncan fancied he recollected: they all seemed rather confused, but all bowed and curtsied to Lord Donalbain, before they followed the landlord into the house, and the cousins returned into the street, which they had scarcely reached before Orlando inquired if Duncan was right in his first conjectures?

"Yes, I know the whole party,"

"Why how foolish they all looked,"
Cameron rejoined: "pray who are they?"

"Sir Robert Thornville and his family,"

was

was the reply, as they were entering the Minister's hotel, where they found Lord and Lady Hartley, Mrs. Montgomery, and Ausby, the three latter having dined at the Palazzo Altieri had found it impossible to refuse Lord David's invitation to supper, who was overwhelming them with compliments, when his son and Duncan returned ; as the more Lord Hartley appeared to shun his company, the more anxiously he seemed to seek his society.

“ An English family are just arrived from Rome, I fancy,” said Orlando, after paying his respects to the Hartley party ; “ what did you say their names were, Lord Donalbain ? ”

“ Thornville,” was the reply.

“ Aye, a Baronet.”

“ What, Sir Robert Thornville ? ” said Lady Hartley ; “ he was a country neighbour of my father's, and frequently visited us. His daughter was a sweet girl, and
promised

promised to make a very handsome woman ; I remember her from a child. ’

“ And so do I,” cried Duncan, “ and with reason too, for her surly father once boxed my ears upon her account.”

“ Then I am fearful you did something to provoke him,” said the smiling Marchioness. . “ I have not seen Miss Thornville since I married, as much about that period the family went abroad for the benefit of Sir Robert’s health, he was then, as I said before, very handsome.”

“ And is now an angel !” cried the affected Orlando.

“ I hope you have no intention to rival your cousin ?” she rejoined ; “ but I am really anxious to know how my Cicisbeo provoked Sir Robert to inflict the punishment he mentioned upon him,”

“ Why then, my lady, you must know Sir Robert sometimes resided in the north of Devon, though Elms Grove was not, I believe, his principal seat, and sometimes
he

he used to honour my Daddy Price with a short visit, and sometimes brought his two children with him. At the time I felt the weight of his hand and foot, for I had a sample of each, Miss Harriet might be about ten or eleven years old, and we chanced to be all three at play in the summer-house you possibly remarked, Lord Hartley, at the extremity of the garden. She had then a beautiful head of hair, and I wished to know whether it curled naturally, she having expressed such doubts respecting my ringlets, which I had desired her to straighten; therefore having allowed her to pull my pate about, I thought I might take the same liberty with her, when unfortunately her old surly father popped unexpectedly upon us, just as I had twisted my hand in her curls, and gave me such a pat on the head as made me stagger again, which he followed by a kick, and then sent Miss in before him, and since then he never allowed her to be out of his sight,

fight, if he did think proper to bring her, which was but seldom."

The company laughed at Duncan's method of repeating his grievances, and Orlando was convinced Miss Thornville had not forgotten what he had suffered upon her account, and would no doubt be very happy to renew her acquaintance with the Marquis of Donalbain. Lord David was of the same opinion, and even blamed Sir Robert for his former treatment of his nephew.

"Nay, nay, uncle, I now know, if I did not then, I was in the wrong; and as I never bear malice, I will take the old fellow by the hand the first time we meet, if he is inclined to be better acquainted; not upon his daughter's account, but because I know he stood very high in Daddy Price's esteem. I heard they were going abroad, and for Sir Robert's health, but many
people

people thought he was fearful of intrusting his son and heir to the care of a governor : so their journey has probably answered many good purposes, besides effecting the old fellow's cure ; for they have certainly been saving money, and have completed the education of Master and Miss."

The appearance of supper changed the conversation ; and soon after Lord and Lady Hartley returned to their villa, which was within half a mile of the town, and Duncan and Ausby took leave of Lord David for the night, after Orlando had cautioned the former not to let Miss Thornville disturb his repose.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE following morning Sir Robert and Mr. Thornville left their cards at the Minister's, who in consequence invited the whole family to dine with him the next Sunday, hinting to Duncan it was purposely to oblige him; and informing Lady Hartley, when he waited upon her and the Marquis, to request they would favour him with their company, that he had invited the Thornville family in hopes of drawing them from their seclusion, at the same time paying them many direct and indirect compliments upon the conjugal affection they displayed

displayed for each other, which he agreed must make a paradise of a desert, and render their charming retreat upon the banks of the Arno peculiarly delightful. To stem this torrent of adulation, the Marquis promised to meet the Thornvilles, who were punctual to their engagement; and after the first general compliments, before any introduction had taken place, Sir Robert affected to recollect Mr. Price, junior, and expressed his pleasure at seeing him at Florence, and even wished to have appeared surprised when introduced to the Marquis of Donalbain by Lord David; he declared himself overjoyed to find so amiable a young man was born to grace a coronet, and positively complimented the young Peer with more finess than the Minister had ever displayed; but Miss Harriet, whose excellent temper made ample amends for her natural simplicity, told Duncan, in the course of the afternoon, that she had recollected him again the moment

she saw him, expatiating upon the surprise she had experienced when she had heard he was heir to a dukedom, which she did at Naples.

This unfortunate speech rather disconcerted Sir Robert, but as no notice was taken of what she said, he hoped it had passed unheeded, and by way of changing the subject, he entered upon an account of his travels, concluding by informing the company he meant to spend three weeks or a month at Florence, during which time he hoped he should be sometimes honoured by the company of the Minister, Lord and Lady Hartley, not forgetting the Marquis of Donalbain, to whom in an oblique way he paid very great court, relating several little incidents he had learnt from Mr. Price, which redounded greatly to his pupil's honour, but did not think it necessary to mention the correction he had

once.

once bestowed upon the heir to the house of Orkney, who had more than once an inclination to remind him of his prowess.

The party separated early, as Duncan and Ausby were going to sleep at Lord Hartley's villa. The Marchioness rallied her *cavaliers servants* upon his partiality for Miss Thornville's beautiful ringlets. He agreed they were still very handsome, and that she was as much to his taste as she had ever been ; as for love he was convinced he should never experience the power of the blind deity again, acknowledging he had once had a twinge of the tender, or as Cameron called it, *la belle passion* ; but if he was obliged, as a penance for past follies, to marry immediately, he was not sure whether his choice would not fall upon the lady with the golden hair ; but he did not suppose the Duke would approve of his marrying the daughter of a Baronet, and

he had given him his word of honour he would not dispose of his hand without his knowledge and approbation.

“ But do you seriously prefer Miss Thornville to the sensible, lively, elegant Elinor Melrofs ?” asked Lady Hartley.

“ Seriously I do, my Lady. Elinor is too clever for me, too quick-sighted, and would, I am sure, frequently blush for the unpolished rustic which had fallen to her share. Now, *vice versa*, Harriet Thornville has received a very retired education, which neither abounds in sense, wit, nor understanding, therefore will exactly suit me, and will look up instead of looking down upon her husband, which your Ladyship, for example, must indubitably have done, had you fallen to the share of any other man besides the Marquis of Hartley.”

“ I perceive you have studied the art of flattery under your cousin Cameron, or else
you

you mean politely to inform me that I must have worn the willow had you been desired to offer me your hand; your heart I find I should have had no chance of obtaining, and yet I am convinced you possess an understanding and a fund of real learning, which must make any woman of sense look up, as you term it, instead of down upon you. Your cousin Cameron is the sort of man to be despised by a wife, and he is one of those amiable beings who generally tyrannize over women of any disposition."

Their arrival at the villa changed the subject, and during a moonlight ramble in its delightful gardens, Duncan agreed the Italian climate was better suited to such walks than that of England. Seven weeks had now elapsed since their arrival at Florence, during which time both Lady Hartley and Duncan had seen every thing worthy of a traveller's notice the city and its

environs afforded, though the latter had generally found time to devote a few hours in a day to those studies his uncle Ausby advised him to pursue. He had an excellent fencing master, and several others equally likely to assist his progress. He spoke French very tolerably before he left Paris, and could now make himself understood in Italian, but had very little taste for music, and admired without being, or affecting to be, a judge of painting. As the summer advanced, he began to complain of the invariable blue of the Italian sky; and Lord Hartley, who was fearful the Tuscan summer might relax as much as the winter was calculated to brace Lady Hartley's nerves, was half inclined to proceed to Venice, instead of Naples, and thence across the Tyrol into Germany, which he thought they would find far more pleasant in the sultry months. Ausby being of the same opinion, at the end of nine weeks they decided to set out for Venice in the course of the

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the next. Sir Robert, upon being made acquainted with their determination, recollected he had staid longer at Florence than he had at first intended, and was only sorry their route did not lay the same way, as he had appointed to meet some friends at Nice, whom he could not, without giving offence, disappoint. Ferdinand had soon perceived the Baronet entertained hopes he thought it very possible Duncan might one day realize, as the more he had seen of Miss Thornville, the more he thought her calculated to make him happy. Both she and her mother had spent some days at their villa; and he and Lady Harrley, to oblige them in return, had once or twice slept at their apartments, which were both large and convenient, and in a very retired situation; he had therefore had frequent opportunities of remarking the partiality Miss Thornville ever evinced for Duncan, whom he consequently hoped the Duke would not object to for a granddaughter,

daughter, as it was pretty evident Elinor Melrofs would neither be happy herself, nor would she contribute to Duncan's felicity, was he to persevere in uniting their destinies ; nor did he scruple to make the remark to Ausby, who perfectly agreed with him.

Orlando, it has been already observed, had undertaken to initiate his uninformed cousin into what he called life, and by dint of persuasion and raillery had induced him more than once, unknown to Ausby, to sleep from home, having, by way of removing what he termed his childish scruples, brought him acquainted with a most beautiful young Florentine, whom he gave him to understand was a woman of the first family and fortune, and who had fallen desperately in love with him (Duncan), from having frequently seen him at the opera, and having a very particular predilection in favour of Englishmen. Duncan was
only

only sorry he could not return her passion, as he was resolved never to marry a foreigner. Orlando laughed at his ignorance, and told him the Italian ladies were not such prudes as his countrywomen, they could, like Eloisa, "curse every law but those which love had made." Intrigues were not considered in the same heinous light at Florence as they were in England, strenuously advising him to push his kind fair one, hinting, should his amour be attended with any disagreeable consequences, he would be far enough off before such a discovery could be made, and the lady need only pay a visit to her friends in the country. He had been engaged in several such adventures, which had all terminated peaceably, and without creating any scandal ; besides he might have his innamorata's life to answer for, if he disappointed her expectations. Italian ladies were violent in their attachments, and very apt to seek revenge, if they thought themselves slighted.

Duncan

Duncan was no Cito; his cousin's reasoning, therefore made a deep impression upon him, particularly as he considered foreign amours of a much less serious nature than English ones; he also knew he was in general reckoned a very handsome man, therefore thought it very probable he might have hit the lady's fancy, so easily allowed himself to be persuaded to pay her a few visits, just to discover whether there was any ground for Orlando's conjectures, who very kindly found excuses for frequently leaving them *tête-à-tête*, when the lady more than confirmed all he had advanced. She spoke French very fluently, and was therefore perfectly understood by her admirer; for Duncan, though soon admitted to terms of the greatest familiarity, was no lover. Their intrigue was, however, conducted with the utmost secrecy, as the lady would not even have her servants suppose she ever admitted him into her dressing-room: nor was Duncan less desirous
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of concealing from his uncle Ausby, that he sometimes visited her after he had retired for the night, which he not unfrequently spent with this bewitching syren, who affected to be inconsolable when she learnt his approaching departure. Indeed, could Duncan have framed any excuse likely to pass current with his friends, he would have wished to have prolonged his stay at Florence; but as Lady Hartley's health, who was supposed to be again in a way to increase her family, was one reason why Ferdinand wished to proceed as speedily as possible to Germany, he could not object to accompany a couple, for whom he felt the highest esteem; he therefore merely endeavoured to console his fair Armida, and by various expensive presents to moderate her grief.

Two nights previous to the one fixed upon for their departure, as they meant to travel more by night than by day,
 Lord

Lord and Lady Hartley, who had been long invited to a private concert at the Altieri palace had agreed to sleep at Sir Robert Thornville's, where the Envoy, Orlando, Duncan, and Mr. Ausby, were invited to a farewell supper ; the heat of the weather rendering dinner visits very unpleasant, and they did not separate till a late hour.

Duncan having accompanied his uncle home, immediately retired to his apartment, but as soon as every thing was quiet, set out, according to promise, to his Dulcinea's, who appeared more than usually melancholy when she admitted him by a private door, of which she always kept the key. Duncan naturally inquired why she looked so sorrowful. " Could he wonder at her dejection," she replied, " when he reflected this was the last night but one she should be blessed with his company ; but upon the whole," she continued, " it may
be

be for the best, for though I shall be miserable, I shall escape detection, as I heard from my husband this afternoon, and he writes that he expects to be at Florence in three or four days, or a week at farthest."

"Your husband!" exclaimed the astonished Duncan; "why, I never knew before you were married."

"Oh, no," she said, weeping bitterly, "in your company I endeavoured to forget my wretched captivity. But did Mr. Cameron never tell you I was married?"

"Never," was the reply.

"He was fearful, I suppose, you might remind me of my misfortunes, as he knows what a tyrant I am fated to obey. Fortunately military duty frequently obliges him to leave Florence."

"What noise was that?" asked Duncan, interrupting her; when she answered, evidently very much agitated, "I thought I heard a door creak in the next room." He rejoined, "I certainly fastened them

all

all after me.”—She hastily replied, “Sure, in God’s name, that wretch has not deceived me? he alone has a second key to the door by which you entered. Oh! for heaven sake, hide your——”

At that moment the bed-room door flew open. Duncan, who had not begun to undress, started up, but had not advanced three steps before he was met by a tall stout ill-looking fellow, wrapped in a long dirty cloak, and whose face was concealed by a large flapped hat, but who muttering something which Duncan was unable to understand, darted upon him, and plunged a dagger or stiletto into his left side. The blow was evidently aimed at his heart, but the weapon chancing to strike upon one of his ribs, it took a different direction, though the wound it inflicted was both deep and dangerous. Duncan, by no means aware of his base design, was turning to say something consolatory to the partner

partner of his guilt at the moment he received the wound ; but he was in time to seize the assassin's arm as he withdrew the poniard, and a scuffle ensued, in which Duncan would in all likelihood have come off victorious, if the female had not caught hold of one of his arms, crying, " for God's sake don't murder him, bad as he is."

Thus doubly beset, he immediately conceived it was a concerted plan to deprive him of existence, therefore only thought of making his escape, if possible ; to effect which he flung the lady from him with all the violence he could exert, and tripping up the heels of the villain who had assassinated him, he caught up the only light there was, and made the best of his way down stairs,

They did not attempt to follow him ; the private door had been left open by the last comer, he therefore rushed into the street.

street, but had not proceeded many paces before, owing to excess of pain and loss of blood, his strength failed him, and he was obliged to lean against a wall, keeping one hand to his side, while he supported himself with the other. All around was perfectly quiet, not a soul was to be seen in the street; he was therefore in hopes of reaching his own lodgings without any farther molestation, and made an effort for that purpose, but could only reach the corner of the street before he was again obliged to stop, and much doubted whether without assistance he should be able to proceed another step; he grew so faint, indeed, that he would in all probability have fallen to the ground in another second, if his guardian angel, in the shape of Miss Thornville, followed by her own maid, had not run towards and caught hold of him.

"Don't my eyes deceive me?" faintly inquired the enfeebled Duncan: "what
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can have brought Miss Thornville out at such an hour ?"—She was unable to reply, terror at what she saw having bereaved her of the power of articulation; but tearing a handkerchief from round her neck, she endeavoured to staunch the blood which flowed abundantly from his wound. She then, assisted by her no less terrified Abigail, supported him to her father's lodgings, which were fortunately within a stone's throw.

The moment they had placed the half-expiring Duncan upon a sofa in one of the lower rooms, she sent her maid to call her brother, who, unable to afford her any assistance, or to learn from her what had happened to Duncan, hastened to summon Sir Robert to their help, whose astonishment may be better conceived than described, when he perceived his daughter half-undressed, covered with blood, every joint trembling, and as pale as ashes, supporting
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the now, to all appearance, lifeless corpse of Lord Donalbain.

To ask for any explanation he found a vain attempt ; but perceiving the wounded man still breathed, he hastened to fetch Ruspini's famous styptic, without which he never travelled, and having applied some to the wound, dispatched a servant for the first surgeon in Florence : then, fearful of being implicated in so unpleasant an affair, hurried to Lord Hartley's room, whom he rather abruptly awoke, but had presence of mind enough not to tell him before the Marchioness why he had disturbed his repose, merely saying, an Italian gentleman had brought him a message he was unable to understand, so he had taken the liberty to knock at his Lordship's door, and as Lady Hartley did not see his pallid face and terrific looks, she did not participate in his alarm.

Ferdinand

Ferdinand, who had merely stopped to throw his *robe de chambre* over his shoulders, appeared almost petrified with horror when he learnt why he had been thus, as he at first thought, unseasonably awoke; he hurried into the saloon, where had been left the lifeless Duncan, who was not the only one he found insensible, Miss Thornville having fainted away during her father's absence, to the increasing alarm of her maid and brother; and as, if purposely to keep the impatient and agitated Ferdinand in suspense, the Abigail, unused to such scenes of blood, and terrified beyond endurance, followed her mistress's example; nor were either of them recovered when the most eminent surgeon in Florence and his assistant joined the group, which had been increased by the arrival of Lady Thornville, who, with several female attendants, was busily employed in endeavouring to recover her daughter, and the no less humane Anne.

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In reply to Ferdinand's anxious and impatient enquiries, the surgeon assured him Lord Donalbain still lived, highly applauding the Baronet's successful attempt to stop the bleeding, and assured them he entertained great hopes that the wound, though dangerous, was not mortal. As it was necessary that it should be immediately probed and dressed, Duncan was conveyed, because it was the nearest, and upon the ground floor, into the bed Sir Robert and his wife had risen from. The surgeon then declared the wound had been given by a tilletto, which had very narrowly missed touching the vital part, and that even now he could not pretend to pronounce his Lordship out of danger, though he was inclined to hope for the best, as he was so young, and appeared to have so good a constitution.

Having applied the proper dressings, and forced some drugs down his throat, Duncan began to revive, and was able to press
Ferdinand's

Ferdinand's hand, who had supported him during the examination of his wound, and whose countenance strongly evinced the concern he felt. As quiet was particularly necessary, the surgeon would not suffer his patient to address any one ; and having administered a composing cordial, he obliged every one, his assistant excepted, with whom he left proper orders, to leave the room. Ferdinand now very naturally enquired how and where the Marquis had been wounded ? These were questions no one could resolve. Sir Robert and his son could merely relate how they had been alarmed ; nor was Ferdinand at all wiser, who now exclaimed, " I am determined to be at the bottom of this villainous piece of business, if it costs me half my fortune—the Marquis must have been assassinated—but let us hasten to impart the melancholy tidings to Mr. Ausby ; he may be able to give us some clue to discover the perpetrator of so horrid a deed. Miss Thornville is

not yet sufficiently recovered to give us any information ; I will make some excuse to Lady Hartley, and be ready to attend you in a few seconds, Sir Robert," hastening back to his own room.

Being well acquainted with his wife's strength of mind, he by degrees informed her why they had been disturbed. She was excessively shocked, and would have rose to have assisted in recovering Miss Thornville, but he requested her to lie still, as the first surgeon in the city was in the house, and she would only fatigue herself, and flurry her spirits without having it in her power to be of any material service to the terrified Harriet, who was as yet totally unable to account for Lord Donalbain's being her father's.

Ausby was even more alarmed than either the Brunet or Ferdinand had been, as he was convinced the Duke's life depended in

a great measure upon that of his grandson's, whom he had supposed in bed and fast asleep; but upon interrogating his Lordship's valet, who was called to attend his master, he acknowledged, after some hesitation, that the Marquis frequently went out after Mr. Ausby supposed him retired for the night; but as to where, he declared he knew no more than the child unborn.

By the time they returned to the Baronet's, Miss Thornville was rather more recovered, but was still unable to enter into the wished-for details; and as the Surgeon absolutely prohibited their even seeing his patient, had they been so inclined, they could not have applied to him for any information. They were therefore kept in this irksome state of suspense for an hour or more, till Miss Thornville was able to converse with them; when she began as follows:

“ Five nights ago, after having retired to my apartment rather later than usual, I sent my maid down again to fetch me something I wanted, remaining in the dark. During her absence, the fineness of the evening tempted me to put by the curtain, and open my window, when, to my great surprise, at one nearly opposite, though at a considerable distance, I perceived the Marquis of Donalbain. Fancying, however, I must have been mistaken, I did not mention the circumstance to Anne, who at that moment returned with the light, which effectually prevented me from seeing any thing more just then ; but a spirit of curiosity, I am now very happy I indulged, induced me to watch that particular window. The following evening, as the distance between that and my own was too great to allow me to be at any certainty ; I therefore this time provided myself with an opera glass, and having concealed my light, I plainly saw the same gentleman enter the
room.

room, and had scarcely a doubt but it was the Marquis, though he did not remain long enough with his face towards the window for me to be absolutely convinced, as a gauze curtain, which was always down, rather intercepted my view of the apartment. I therefore continued to watch the next and the following night, but saw nothing of the Marquis till this very evening, when, being as usual upon the look out, I saw a light brought into the room by a servant, who was followed by a very elegant woman, who dismissed the maid the moment she had placed the wax taper upon a table facing the window, and in a few minutes the lady also left the room, but soon returned with a gentleman, of whose features, by the means of my glass, I had so good a view. I was convinced beyond a doubt it was Lord Donalbain, who had not been more than ten minutes with the lady when I saw him start up, and advance to-

wards the middle of the room), where he was met by a very tall man I should suppose, wrapped in a long cloak, and whose face was concealed by a large flapped hat. They appeared to address each other rather earnestly for a few seconds, when I perceived the man in the cloak raise his arm, and suddenly make a dart at the Marquis with a very glittering weapon. A violent scuffle succeeded the blow, in which the lady seemed to interfere, but in whose defence I cannot pretend to say, as it ended in the Marquis's catching up the light, and running out of the room, which he left in total darkness. Exceedingly alarmed at what I had seen, and fearing, as has proved the case, the Marquis was wounded, I made Anne accompany me down stairs and into the street, when I immediately ran towards the corner, from whence I knew I could see the door of the house that the window in my room overlooked."

She

She then described in what situation she had found the Marquis, whom she and her maid had supported into their saloon, with every other, &c. likely to throw any light upon this strange affair. Her auditors were, it may be supposed, all attention during her recital, and the moment she ceased speaking, Ferdinand eagerly requested she would point out the house where the assassination had been committed, which she described so minutely from her own observations upon it by day-light, he was convinced he could not mistake the door, he said, declaring he hardly knew what to think of this strange affair, while his animated countenance expressed doubts and suspicions he seemed averse to mention.

"Mr. Ausby," he proceeded, after a moment's pause, "you shall do me the favour to accompany me to this fair lady, with whom I am anxious to be rather better acquainted, and I think it would not be

amiss were you, Sir Robert, and your son, to be of the party; we may say or hear things that will require several witnesses."

No objections being made to this proposal, they set off immediately; and after knocking for a considerable time without being able to gain admittance, the master of the house came to the door, of whom the Marquis immediately enquired who occupied such a bed-room, describing its situation upon the second floor. The appearance of four strangers, who had all taken the precaution to arm themselves, at such a time of night, rather startled the person he addressed, who, after some hesitation, replied, "the Chevalier Serutti and his lady."—"Lead the way to their apartment," said Ferdinand, in a tone which implied he would be obeyed. The landlord therefore preceded them up stairs in silence, and rapped at the door, but no one answering, though the knocking was repeated with

with redoubled violence, after every fresh disappointment, Ferdinand sent the door in with his foot, and catching the light out of the man's hand, was the first to enter, and instantly flew towards the bed. No one was there; he then looked round the room; all was silent as the grave, and no one was to be seen; but casting his eyes upon the floor he perceived the stains of blood which had evidently been recently shed. "Wretch!" he cried, addressing the now terrified landlord, "tell me, instantly, how those stains came there." The man called upon all the saints in heaven to witness his oath; while he swore he knew no more than the child unborn; he thought that his lodger had been in bed. The horror which appeared impressed upon his countenance, while he contemplated the blood, was, the gentlemen thought, a convincing proof of his innocence; when Ferdinand, who was anxiously exploring every corner of the room, caught sight of

the deadly weapon which had been lost in the scuffle, the handle of which appeared from under the bed. He seized hold of it, while the landlord falling upon his knees, began to call down vengeance upon whoever had spilled the blood, which still frightened him even to see, earnestly enquiring who had been wounded, declaring he would not, for as much as he was worth, have had so wicked a deed committed in his house, without satisfying them, though they all thought it very probable he might be innocent. The Marquis desired to be informed where his lodgers were to be found ? Again he called upon his patron to witness the truth of what he swore, that the Signora Scrutti, her husband had been absent more than a month, had come in just before dusk ; he could not be mistaken, having admitted her himself, and, to the best of his knowledge and belief, she had not gone out afterwards, though there was a private
door

door that led into his garden, of which, unknown to him, she might have procured a key. "Where is her husband?" asked Ausby—"That is more than I can tell, Sir."—"Is she actually married?" rejoined Ferdinand: "don't attempt to deceive me, for it would be very fruitless, and you will soon be called upon to give a very strict account of her before the proper magistrates."—"I have every reason to believe she is married; Sir, and to a very bad husband; but, as I said before, he had not been at home for some time."—"How long has she lodged in your house?"—"These nine months and better."—"And what gentlemen have you known visit her since her husband's absence?"—"Why, I am sorry to say, Sir, I have observed more than one, and have told her several times it was what I would, not allow, but she only laughed at my remonstrances, observing, revenge was sweet, and such-like sayings. To be sure, she is a most beau-

tiful creature, and never made a word about paying my demands ; so far she was an excellent lodger, or I would not have kept her.”—“ But have not you of late remarked a young Englishman of distinction among her most familiar visitors.”—“ The Signor Cameron, the British Envoy’s son, frequently visited her, but I am sure he never, nor any one else to my knowledge, slept in my house. She knew I never would, knowingly, allow of such proceedings.”

Ferdinand did not appear at all surprised by what the man said ; but Ausby exclaimed, “ Can it be possible ? can he have any thing to do in this horrid catastrophe ? ” looking at Lord Hartley, who, after a moment’s pause, (during which they appeared anxious to divine each others thoughts,) said, “ We ought to judge no one guilty till we are better acquainted with the circumstances or motives which
might

might lead to the perpetration of this horrid deed. Sir Robert looked anxiously at both, declaring he had always had a dread upon his spirits since he had resided in Italy; and then observed, Mr. Cameron was the next heir to the dukedom if his cousin died. "He is," replied Ausby; "but I trust in God I shall never live to see him Marquis of Donalbain."—"I hope not," was the reply: "but what further steps ought to be taken to elucidate this dreadful and mysterious affair?"

Ferdinand had been for some time lost in thought, but now observed, "Strangers as we all are, the British Envoy is upon every account the most proper person to whom we can apply to obtain justice of the murderer."

"Undoubtedly," replied the other three.

"He must see justice done his nephew," continued the Baronet.

"I will

“ I will take care of this well prepared offensive weapon,” said Ferdinand, securing the stiletto : “ I should also wish this apartment should be shut up ;” asking the landlord if he could not by some means fasten the door, the lock having been rendered useless. He swore no soul should enter it till their pleasure was known, requesting they would look at every thing before they went away. They did as he desired, but upon examining the closets and drawers, found every thing had been removed, which was a proof, they all agreed, it had been a premeditated plan, as there had not been sufficient time since the murder had been attempted for every thing to have been carried away, and the room left in such order. The landlord was even more surprised than they were, and began to calculate how much he should lose by his lodger’s flight, averring she had a large quantity of clothes, and which could not have been all carried away so suddenly without

without his knowledge. Her other room was equally stripped, therefore it became useless to secure the door, as what remained was the property of the landlord; they therefore proceeded to the Envoy's house. Day was beginning to break when they knocked at the great gates of his hotel. The first person Ferdinand (whose eyes were fixed upon the front windows) discerned was Mr. Cameron in his night-gown and cap, and who wished to have retreated unperceived, but upon Ferdinand's beckoning to him, he flung open the window before the porter could open the gate, and anxiously enquired what was the matter?

"Come down," was the reply, "and I will satisfy your curiosity."

The young gentleman obeyed the summons, and so speedily, that Ferdinand could not help remarking he had been very expeditious

tious in dressing, as he was in pantaloons, stockings, and shoes, and even had a waistcoat under his robe de chambre. The apparently terrified youth declared he hardly knew whether he had any thing on or not. He happened to be awake when they knocked, and had, without knowing what he was about, slipped on the first things that came to hand, again anxiously enquiring what had procured them this unexpected visit.

Before Lord Hartley, whom Ausby wished should be spokesman, could reply, Lord David, equally in deshabille, joined the party, expressing great surprise when he found who had disturbed his repose.

"We wished to consult your Lordship as speedily as possible," said Ferdinand, "therefore did not stay to reflect upon the fitness or unfitness of the hour."

"There was no necessity, my Lord ;
but

but your looks alarm me. Surely nothing has befallen the ~~Marquesses~~, or any of my good friends.

Ferdinand, who ~~had~~ already been remarked, had, from the moment they left Paris, treated both Lord David and his son with the most distant politeness, for reasons best known to himself, was even more than cool, during this interview, as he was several times barely polite, and displayed so much pride and hauteur, that even Ausby was astonished. Before he satisfied the curiosity of either, he fixed his piercing eyes upon them in turn, as if desirous, by prolonging their suspense, of discovering their most secret thoughts; and as it was him they had both addressed, neither of the other-gentlemen chose to break the silence. Ausby was convinced Ferdinand had formed suspicions very similar to those he had advised him not to encourage. At last he said, "I am really sorry, my Lord, we were

were under the disagreeable necessity of disturbing your repose. Mr. Cameron was awake and dressed when he knocked for admittance, but I make no excuses; but I must tell you whether you are acquainted with any of the female friends, particularly those to whom he has introduced Lord Donalbain?"

"What can you mean, my dear Marquis, by so strange a question. Sure no accident has befallen my nephew?"

"I am truly sorry it has fallen to my share to assure you the fears you express are perfectly well founded, as we have discovered a plot of the most atrocious nature, and which has but too well succeeded, has been formed to deprive the Marquis of Donalbain of his existence. Can you or Mr. Cameron form an idea who were the planners and perpetrators of this diabolical deed, as I cannot believe his assassination originated in the mere jealous pique of the Chevalier Serutti, who certainly could not have

have any interested motive (a large reward excepted) for committing so unprovoked a murder? However, though in great danger, we yet trust his Lordship will live to see his assassins and their abettors brought to justice."

"God send he may!" flammered out the Envoy, while obliged to support himself against the wall, so greatly was he shocked, and his son appeared more affected by the news than he was, though he made shift to articulate that he did not conceive he had any thing to answer, for he had never introduced his cousin into any improper company.

Ferdinand, under whose piercing glances he gladly lowered his eyes, asked if the Signora Berutti, the tenant of a small apartment upon the second floor of a very mean habitation, was a proper acquaintance for the Marquis of Donalbain, particularly in

the absence of her husband. "What does my cousin say?"

"For heaven sake," interrupted the Ambassador, "relieve me from my present state of cruel suspense, what has befallen my nephew?"

"I have already told your Lordship he has been assassinated either by the Signora Serutti's husband, or some other bravo employed for the same purpose, and we waited upon you, as considering you in your official capacity the most proper person to assist us in discovering not only his assassins, but also their motives for perpetrating such an action."

"Most willingly, Marquis, will I assist you with all my power, and more zeal than I ever displayed in a similar affair, which I am sorry to say are not uncommon in this country, and frequently pass unheeded even by the nearest relations of the sufferers."

"But

“ But pray who is this Signora Serutti ? where shall we find her ? ”

“ The discovery of her secret retreat must be the effect of your Lordship’s diligent researches,” replied Ferdinand. “ She is, doubtless, as guilty as her husband or paramour, or she would not have thought it necessary to have made her escape, for which she had taken care to prepare by previously removing all her cloaths and other effects of any value. This,” pulling it out of his pocket, “ is the dagger which was plunged into your nephew’s side. The stains it still bears will convince you he is in no slight danger, and I am convinced you will agree with me neither pains nor expense ought to be spared to bring such darling villains to justice, which may be obtained even in this country, though perhaps not so easily as in England, but I have friends among the Florentine nobility, who will, I am convinced, exert both their
power

power and interest upon this occasion ; and I here pledge my honour to get at the bottom of this iniquitous business, if I expend my fortune in discovering Scrutti and his wife, and am obliged to apply to every Court in Europe. It may appear extraordinary that I should be thus interested for a friend, but I am resolved to persevere in my inquiries and researches, till I am perfectly satisfied, and I trust your Lordship will zealously second my endeavours."

"Most certainly, Lord Hartley; but for Heaven sake tell me how my nephew really is, and where he was attacked by this man or woman. I protest I cannot hold a joint of me, 'you have so much alarmed me. My very blood runs cold at the bare sight of the stiletto.'"

"And so does mine," retorted the son, whose looks gave strength to his words, as his countenance was even more than ghastly.

The

The Marquis now entered into every detail respecting Duncan, which has been already related, and what they had done in consequence of Miss Thornville's report, concluding, by again declaring, if the Signora Serutti was above ground she should be forthcoming, and he hoped then by their joint influence, nay, it properly was a national concern, that she should be doomed to undergo the most cruel torture if she could not produce the most convincing proofs of her innocence, or did not give up her instigators and accomplices.

"I really cannot conceive her to be so guilty, as she appears to your Lordship," said Lord Darnley; "I blame her undoubtedly for intriguing with my nephew, but cannot imagine she wished to have a man, we must suppose she loved, assassinated; and I think, if your Lordship will put yourself in the place of her husband, you may

may find some excuse for his action at such a moment, and upon such a discovery."

"I did not expect they would have found so strenuous an advocate in your Lordship," was the reply, "nor do I consider Lord Donalbain's assassination to have been occasioned by jealousy, as I think there is every reason to suppose this lady laid the plan to destroy one lover to oblige another, a more favoured one perhaps, or who could bribe her into compliance. But of this I am resolved to be satisfied at any expence and any risk, as I would venture a very considerable wager the plan to murder Lord Donalbain had been previously arranged, and every precaution taken to effect her and her accomplice's escape. But pray, Mr. Cameron, who introduced you to this frail one—is she a Florentine?"

"I really cannot satisfy your Lordship, I am not at all acquainted with her, never was introduced to her."

"Then

“ Then the landlord mistook somebody for you,” said Sir Robert, “ for he told us the Signor Cameron, son to the British Envoy, frequently visited her.”

Orlando was therefore obliged to acknowledge he had some few times been in her company, and had introduced her to his cousin, having never seen any thing in her behaviour which could have led him to suppose she would have been guilty of the crime Lord Hartley laid to her charge. He therefore hoped she would be discovered, and able to prove her innocence; though, be that as it may, he could not be considered as responsible for her actions.

“ I am not conscious I hinted any thing of the sort,” was the reply; “ however, your Lordship now knows what, as British Envoy, you are expected to do upon this occasion, waving your near relationship to Lord Donalbain. I shall, on my side, in-

terest the Altieri family in our cause ; and therefore hope that we shall succeed in bringing the culprits to justice."

" No doubt, my Lord, no doubt ; but could not I see my nephew ?"

" Not without the surgeon's permission, my Lord," replied Ausby ; " and he has given strict orders no one should be admitted into his apartment for the first four-and-twenty hours."

Then he must per force defer his visit, he said ; he would therefore immediately set on foot the strictest enquiry for this Signora Serutti. He should wait upon the Grand Duke as early as etiquette would allow, to prefer a formal complaint against her and her accomplices.

" You will do right, my Lord," said Ferdinand ; " for the present therefore I shall wish you a very good morning."

Ausby,

Aufby, Sir Robert, and Mr. Thornville, followed his example, and they all returned to the Baronet's, where they retired for a few hours to meditate upon the recent adventure.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

ING ten days, Dulcan, though attended by three of the first surgeons in Florence and two physicians, continued in imminent danger. Lady Thornville's own woman, an elderly matron, was his principal nurse, and either Ferdinand or Ausby sat up with him every night; nor yet was either Lady Hartley, Lady Thornville, her daughter, or Mrs. Montgomery, idle: the latter particularly frequently relieved Mrs. Deborah in the sick room. Lord David and Orlando were also very profuse of their offers of service, but were seldom or ever permitted

permitted to see the invalid. They could, therefore, only prove their regard for him by redoubling their zeal to discover the Signora and her husband, in which attempt they were warmly assisted by Lord Hartley, and most of the first families in Florence at his request, Ferdinand having declared himself answerable for every expence that might be incurred; but at the expiration of the ten days, Duncan was pronounced in a fair way of recovery, which he attributed more to the kind care of his English nurses than to the skill of his surgeon, though he agreed they might be very able.

Being, however, both permitted to see and converse with his friends, he gave a very exact account, as nearly as he could recollect of his introduction to the Signora; what had passed between him and Orlando upon that occasion, the progress and termination of their amour; averring, that admit-

ting the stranger was really her husband, she was quite as anxious as he appeared to be to murder him; still he by no means wished she should be brought to justice as he had only been properly punished for intriguing with a married woman. From the moment he had been pronounced out of danger, and Ferdinand had learnt those particulars he alone could acquaint him with, he was seldom to be met with but of an evening. The stiletto which remained in his possession was new, and a handsome reward tempted the maker to come forward, who, in consequence of a second bribe, described the person to whom he sold it, and gave the anxious Ferdinand a hint where he might be met with.

Nothing, however, transpired in consequence of this intelligence, and Ausby was rather astonished to hear him say, the day after Duncan had been removed to his villa for the benefit of the air, that he
found

found it was useless to hope, or exert, to bring either the Signora or her husband to justice ; they having, doubtless, left the Tuscan dominions before any enquiries respecting them had been set on foot ; and to attempt to trace such fugitives would prove a vain research : he, therefore, only wished to leave Florence as speedy as possible, for fear that, not having succeeded in their first attempt, these base wretches should make a second, to prevent which, he never suffered Duncan to stir out without being attended by one or more servants upon whom he could depend ; nor did he, from the time he gave over his researches, ever visit the Envoy or ever receive him when he came to his villa, though his Lordship was suffered to see the invalid whenever he called, which was but seldom, as he felt very much hurt at Lord Hirtley's behaviour, whom he was by no means conscious of having offended, as he told

every one, declaring no man stood higher in his esteem; still no explanation took place, nor did Aubrey or the Thornvilles think it proper to enquire the reason why Ferdinand so purposely shunned the Envoy's society, though the latter were constant visitors at the villa, where they frequently spent the night, Duncan having repeatedly declared it was to them, but particularly to Miss Thornville, that he owed his existence; nor was Ferdinand, apparently, less grateful for their hospitable kindness towards him than he was himself, encouraging them to spend great part of their time in his family circle.

One afternoon, when they were all assembled with the new convalescent, in his dressing-room, the discourse, among the ladies turned upon the prevailing fashions; the Italian and French modes were discussed, when Duncan declared nature was the best

best hair-dresser after all, as the most skilful efforts of art were the best imitations of natural curls ; adding, Miss Thornville had a beautiful head of hair when a child, which had been better dressed by the hand of nature than any foreign friseur could have arranged it.

“ Your Lordship has an excellent memory,” replied the smiling Lady Thornville.

“ Why, I once suffered pretty severely for my admiration of that young lady’s ringlets,” he rejoined ; “ you remember the circumstance, I dare say, Sir Robert.”

“ With infinite regret, I can assure your Lordship, and am sorry to find, what I cannot attempt to excuse, it has made such ^{an} impression upon your mind.”

“ Nay, Sir Robert, you could not suppose me serious ; if any body ought to apologize, it is myself.”

Ferdinand gave a dull turn to the conversation, and reconciled both parties to themselves and each other.

Miss Thornville had from a child felt a great predilection in Duncan's favour, which was not diminished when she learnt his rank and fortune ; to this we may justly attribute her curiosity respecting him, which eventually saved his life ; and thus, what was in itself wrong, enabled her to afford him that succour he stood so much in need of, after he had escaped from the vile Signora. Still, we must acknowledge, she entertained very little hopes of ever bearing the title of Donalbain, as she presumed, the Duke of Orkney would think her as much beneath his heir, as her father would have thought Duncan Price beneath her ; but as he continued to mend rapidly, and the Marquis of Hartley declared his intention of leaving Florence, as soon
as

as he was perfectly recovered, she foresaw they would soon part, never, perhaps, to meet again, as her father meant to set out for England* on the same day the Hartley party set out for Germany; but not being endued with the sensibility of Lady Hartley or Elinor Melrose, she enjoyed the present without anticipating the future.

Ausby was very much at a loss to divine Ferdinand's real sentiments respecting what had befall Duncan; that Orlando should introduce him to a woman of light character was easily accounted for; and, it was possible, he might not have the slightest idea of the dangerous connexion his cousin had formed; yet he was convinced Lord Hartley had suspicions he would by no means have chosen to acknowledge, and he could not help thinking he had made some discoveries he thought it equally necessary to keep secret; because, in the first instance, he was as liberal as sincere in his offers of

A 6

reward

reward for the discovery of the culprit ; and, at the expiration of three weeks, he had not only declared the impossibility of tracing either the Chevalier or his wife : but had told both Lord David and his Italian friends, he would be no longer answerable for the rewards he had at first offered ; but the less hopes he seemed to entertain, the more Lord David expressed of yet bringing these daring offenders to justice ; nor could he refrain from boasting of his zeal in Ferdinand's presence, whom he accidentally met at the Baronet's ; who, coolly replied, he would advise him to let the matter rest, as he intended to do ; the look, which accompanied these words, was particularly noticed by Ausby, and gave him reason to suppose they meant more than met the ear ; and Lord David's evident confusion increased his suspicions. However, he continued, as well as Orlando, to visit his dear nephew at least once a day ; but Duncan could not help remarking

Lord

Lord Hartley never entered his apartment while they were there ; nor could the Envoy refrain from complaining of the uniform coolness with which that nobleman man treated him to Ausby, appealing to him whether he had not done every thing in his power to render his Lordship's stay in the environs of Florence agreeable.

Ausby in return, assured him he never permitted himself to make any remarks upon his Lordship's conduct ; advising the Envoy, if he felt himself offended, to apply to him for an explanation. This Lord David declined, he might be too susceptible ; but even the appearance of slight from those he esteemed was sure to affect him ; what he attributed to design might be the effect of chance ; in fact, he should be at a loss to know what to say to the Marquis upon the subject. "

" Why ,

“ Why then, uncle,” said Duncan, who began to suspect, from Ferdinand’s treatment of him and his cousin, that he thought the latter was better acquainted with the Signora Scrutti’s sanguinary principles than he had chosen to acknowledge, “ e’en take no notice of what you don’t seem inclined to take the only step to remedy.” His Lordship agreed it would be best, and soon after took his leave.

It had been agreed from the first no one should inform the Duke of Orléans what had befallen his grandson, and all servants had been strictly forbidden to mention his accident in their letters to their respective friends. Lord David was the only one who did not see the absolute necessity of keeping his father in ignorance ; alledging, when it was proposed, supposing his nephew died, surely he ought to be prepared for such an event ; to which Ferdinand.

Ferdinand hastily replied, " Your Lordship has to the full as much reason to pray for his recovery as we have ; and as for rendering the Duke miserable, while there is a possibility the whole affair may be concealed from him, I would not advise you to try the experiment."

Lord David was easily convinced his Lordship's evasion was right, and readily, he said, acceded to his better judgment. The secret was therefore preserved, though they presumed his Grace would wonder they staid so much longer than they had intended in Tuscany, which was to be attributed to Lady Hartley's health.

Duncan was, however, so well recovered at the expiration of six weeks, they settled to leave Florence the following Monday. The Envoy, therefore, invited the Hartleys, with whom Auby and Duncan continued to reside, and the Thornvilles, not forgetting

forgetting his nephew and brother-in-law to a farewell dinner on the Sunday : never having an opportunity of seeing Ferdinand, except they accidentally met at any of the Italian families the former visited, he could only invite him by means of a card ; which his Lordship had no sooner perused, than he wrote one in return, excusing both himself and Lady Hartley from joining his party, they having been both for some time engaged to spend the day at the Marchese Venoni's.

Ausby and Duncan had, when asked, promised for themselves ; they were therefore sorry when Ferdinand carelessly informed them, he had been to send his and Lady Hartley's excuses to Lord David, mentioning where they were engaged ; adding, he had half promised the Venoni's to bring Donalbain and Mr. Ausby with him ; " but I presume, it would be useless to expect you would favour them with your company,

continued

situated as you no doubt are respecting Lord David ?”

“ Why, we could not very well refuse his invitation,” said Ausby, “ as he told us he gave this dinner to celebrate his nephew’s recovery, and as a sort of farewell repast.”

“ So he wrote me,” replied Ferdinand, “ and he has certainly great reason to rejoice our friend has so happily defeated the machinations of these Serutti’s ; but without asking why or wherefore, you will infinitely oblige me, my dear Duncan, by being suddenly seized with whatever complaint you think most likely to answer the desired end, on the Sunday morning ; and by suffering Mr. Ausby, who I would particularly advise to attend his Lordship, to make your excuse upon the plea of indisposition. I do not feel myself at liberty to explain my motives for this request ; but I have a wish, which I trust you will gratify, that he should be disappointed of his

his dear nephew's company, quitting the room almost immediately."

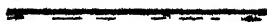
"What can our friend mean, my dear uncle?" eagerly enquired Duncan.

"I shall not pretend to guess," was the reply.

"I believe he thinks Mr. Cameron highly to blame for having introduced you to the Signora Scrutti; and may wish to convince both him and his father of his displeasure; he that as it may, he evinced such sincere solicitations for your recovery, was so indefatigable in endeavouring to bring the Scrutti's to justice at any expence, and has in every respect proved himself so sincere and zealous a friend, I would advise you to comply with his wishes, which may be done, as he has planned it, without giving any offence to Lord David."

Duncan readily acquiesced, though he was now perfectly convinced, both his
friend

friend and Ausby had suspicions of his uncle and cousin, which he could not help hoping were unfounded, though he had more reasons than them, he thought, for condemning at least his cousin.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON the Sunday morning, when Duncan's principal surgeon, the only one who still visited him, called, he told him he had such a weight upon his stomach, he wished to take an emetic, which he thought would relieve him: the surgeon declared, he could not consent to his taking a medicine, which might occasion efforts that would be very prejudicial to him; requesting him he would enter into some further explanations concerning his complaint, which obliged his patient to acknowledge he
merely

merely wished to have some excuse to stay at home.

“ Then I can afford your Lordship to dine, without either punishing you or endangering your health ; I will send you a cordial, merely calculated to strengthen your stomach, which you will immediately swallow ; and when I call again, which shall be between twelve and one, you can tell me you are going out to dinner. This, after what you have taken, I shall not suffer ; and shall blame you for not telling me so during my first visit ; as in that case I should not have sent you the medicine, which, having once taken, it would be the height of imprudence to think of venturing out.”

“ Yours is a much better thought than mine,” said Duncan. “ I own I was not fond of the task I allotted myself. But mind, you will not be answerable for my life, if I venture out after I have swallowed
your

your cordial, which I request you would make very palatable."

The surgeon promised to consult his taste ; and thus were matters arranged, to the no small mortification of Lord David, who learned with extreme regret the absolute prohibition of his nephew's surgeon ; as he had even engaged himself to dine and spend the evening with his patient, to prevent his leaving home, his own reputation in a great measure depending upon Lord Donalbain's perfect recovery from a wound which had been the talk of all Florence.

To be also disappointed of Lord Hartley's company, was an additional source of vexation to Lord David ; though he took care to be satisfied that Ferdinand and his wife did actually spend the day at the Venoni villa, where most of the first nobility in Florence were also assembled ; and

Ausby

Ausby accounted so satisfactorily for his nephew's absence, to have murmured against the surgeon's decree, would have evinced he was not so much interested in Duncan's recovery as the disciple of St. Come.

Lord and Lady Hartley returned home early in the evening, and had a hearty laugh with the invalid respecting his well-arranged plan to avoid dining at his uncle's. But still Ferdinand, though evidently very much pleased, entered into no explanation respecting his motives for requesting he would stay at home ; and Duncan had so high an opinion of a man who had given him such convincing proofs of his sincere regard for him ; and whose talents and principles he held in the greatest estimation, that he would have done any thing rather than have risked disobliging Lord Hartley.

As

As the time drew near for their departure, he had become anxious to make either Sir Robert, or some part of Thornville family, some present, in return for the trouble, expence, and fatigue he had occasioned them; though he had learnt from Auby, that every thing his medical attention had prescribed, had been generously provided by Lord Hartley; whose servants had also relieved those of Sir Robert from the trouble they would otherwise have had; nor had the Marquis stopped at any more in addition to the surgeon's very considerable charges, which he had suffered Mr Auby to settle, he had made them all a very handsome present, and insisted upon defraying every expence incurred by sending for a famous physician from Vienna; alleging it was step he had taken, merely for his own satisfaction. It may therefore be supposed he had greatly endeared himself to both Auby and Duncan, who frequently declared he had laid them under

obligations

obligations they could never repay. To him, however, did the latter apply for advice respecting what present he ought to make the Thornvilles.

"Well, suppose you give your fair preserver a ring?" said Ferdinand.

"What, a diamond one?" asked Duncan.

"Aye, or a plain gold one, if you think it will be more acceptable."

"Now I know you are laughing at me, so it shall not be a ring of any kind, nor will I give her any thing, therefore think of something for her mother."

"How say I, why you certainly are far more obliged to the daughter."

"I beg pardon; for I owe her my life, but I am sure you would not wish me to reward her with a wedding-ring; besides, I have given my grandfather my word of honour to consult him in my choice of a wife."

“ A most dutiful grandchild you are, I must acknowledge,” replied the laughing Ferdinand; “ but seriously, I wish you had mentioned your intentions rather sooner; I hardly know what to recommend—I must consult Lady Hartley as to what will be proper for her ladyship’s age, if you are determined to make your present to the mother instead of the daughter.”

“ Why, to be very honest, my good friend, I would not willingly raise a hope it may never be in my power to realize; and, vanity apart, I do think Miss Thornville has a sort of sneaking kindness for me, and, for my own part, I never yet saw a girl more to my mind; yet I know her father would never have allowed Duncan Price to look so high for a wife, and my grandad may, perhaps, now turn the tables upon him; so, till I am better acquainted with his sentiments, I think it most proper to keep my distance.”

“ I commend

"I commend your notion, my dear Duncan, and will take care to provide you with a suitable present in time."

Ferdinand did not forget his promise, as on the Monday morning they were to leave the villa in the evening, he put a small seal-skin case into his hands, desiring him to leave it with Lady Thornville when he went to bid farewell to that amiable woman. Duncan found the box contained a pair of ear-rings, which struck him as being very handsome, though he was quite ignorant of their value; nor would Ferdinand tell him what they cost, which made him protest he never would consult him again, as he was already more in his debt than he should be able to repay for some time, at the rate he went on. He, however, proceeded, in company with the Hartleys, Auby, and Mrs. Montgomery, to pay his farewell visit to the Thornville's, and was almost sorry he could not, as he would

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formerly

formerly have done, have taken Harriet round the neck, and given her a hearty kiss; as it was, he was obliged to content himself with kissing her trembling hand, which he thought a very poor substitute for her lips, and bade her adieu with more regret than he thought their separation would have occasioned him; while Sir Robert hoped, if his Lordship ever again visited Devonshire, he would honour them with a visit.

“That would be a very poor compliment, Sir Robert, in return for the kindness with which you have treated me. I will purposely visit the north of Devon, to renew my thanks for the hospitable reception you afforded me here.”

He then made his parting bow, and acknowledged to Ferdinand, as they drove from the door, he was not sorry the ceremony of taking leave was over. From the
Baronet's

Baronet's they proceeded to the Envoy's; Lord Hartley observing something was due to his official character. It is needless to say they were very graciously received, and that every refreshment the season permitted him to offer was set before them. When they rose to depart, he hoped his dear nephew would experience no inconvenience from his journey, and that when he again visited Tuscany, he would be more fortunate than he had been this time. As this was his first, Duncan thought it would be his last visit to Italy; not foreseeing, he observed, business, and he was sure a search after pleasure would never again bring him upon the continent. Lord David could only express his regret; and in the evening Lady Hartley, Mrs. Montgomery, and Mr. Ausby, left Florence in the Marquis's coach; his Lordship, as they had agreed to travel slowly, driving Duncan in his curicle, their respective suites following in the other

carriages, and about the same time the Thornville family set out for England.

Duncan, owing to his late confinement, great sufferings, and loss of blood, was by no means so stout as when he left Paris; but he had not been idle from the time he had been permitted to resume his sedentary studies; nay, even thought he had learnt more during the last three weeks he had spent at Florence, than in twice that time when he was neither debarred from walking nor riding. But his proficiency in French and Italian would be of little avail to him in Germany: he observed and wondered why every nation could not enter into an agreement to converse in the same language, it would be so infinitely more convenient, and fetch a saving of time and trouble to all parties; but he supposed the difficulty would be, they would never agree which to make the universal dialect.

as every nation preferred their own, therefore was fearful so judicious an arrangement would never take place.

As Ausby, who had some knowledge in physic, thought riding in an open carriage, or on horseback, very likely to accelerate his perfect recovery, and whenever the weather, permitted, and that very seldom varied, he did one or the other, every now and then dismounting, to examine the different soils and the various plants peculiar to the clime, and either condemning, criticising, or applauding the deficient modes of agricultures he saw practised ; and at other times he listened to his friend's and uncle's accounts of the different states they passed through ; but though he admired Venice, and the Doge's Palace, the Adriatic, he soon gave Germany the decided preference to Italy ; the country and the people reminded him of his native land ; they seemed more industrious, and far better disposed

than the Italians, and he would be answerable were not so treacherous.

Ferdinand agreed there was no comparison to be made between the inhabitants of the two countries, and thought some parts of Germany were superior to Italy ; still, because he (Duncan) had reason to complain of the treachery for which the Italians were even proverbial, it was unjust to cast such an aspersion upon a whole nation, among whom there were doubtless some excellent characters, and there were, perhaps, Englishmen to the full as treacherous as the most dissimulating Italian, and much more to be dreaded. Duncan never scrupled giving up to Ferdinand, who he allowed generally reflected before he spoke, whereas he often spoke from the impulse of the moment, while Aubrey endeavoured to decide in his own mind which of these two young men were likely to prove, from their different modes of education.

cation, of the greatest utility to mankind in general. The Marquis of Hartley possessed many advantages Duncan could not boast, and was perfectly calculated to make a shining figure in the annals of his country. But Duncan possessed all the milder virtues, and was very likely to make even national improvements in agriculture, therefore promised to be a more useful member of society than his learned friend, whose talents were perhaps more likely to astonish than to benefit his fellow-subjects. Yet he knew, and was very fond of experimental farming, and had also made a great study of agriculture; therefore, upon the whole, he thought the balance greatly preponderated in his favour, as a wise Minister or an able statesman has it in his power to be of more extensive utility than a man in any station who leads a life of retirement; though he was persuaded Duncan would be, as his grandfather had been before, a father to the fatherless and a

friend to the unfortunate. Such were Ausby's private thoughts, who nevertheless, attached as he was to Duncan, gave the preference to Lord Hartley, notwithstanding his mysterious adventures at Paris had never been accounted for; still, admitting he was a libertine, and he could not absolutely divest himself of the idea, he was a most amiable man, and was very unwilling his evil propensities should afflict the truly amiable woman, who seemed to have but one great object in view, which was to render him completely happy, and he no less tenderly returned her affections and attentions. Even Duncan was afraid he should never make half so good a husband, though he trusted he should do his endeavours to render any deserving woman happy.

Having visited most of the principal cities upon the Rhine, they entered the United Provinces, where Duncan found
very

very little to admire, the autumn having set in rather wet and dreary ; they therefore hastened to Ostend, and having requested his Grace would give them the meeting at Hartley House, which they hoped to reach during the first week in November, they had the pleasure of finding him, Lady Helen, and her daughter, ready to receive them, and very happy to see them once more safely returned to England. His Grace and the ladies had, at Ferdinand's particular request, taken up their abode in the square ; where, as we have just before said, they gave the travellers a most cordial welcome.

The first compliments, or rather kind inquiries, being over, his Grace, having anxiously surveyed his grandson, said, " Surely, my dear Duncan, you have not been well, though I own you look very hearty ; but you are by no means so stout,

as you were, nor have you so good a colour."

It had been agreed Lord Donalbain's Florence adventure should still, if possible, be kept a secret, as the mentioning of it might lead to many questions which Lord Hartley thought would be better avoided, and he was now, indeed, literally become Ausby's oracle.

Duncan therefore replied, "You are not the only one that has made the same remark, my dear Sir, but most people think I look the better for the alteration my person has undergone. I have been studying politeness you know, and how to enact the fine gentleman, therefore I ought not to repine at having but a little of my fat and colour."

"You certainly look better than when we parted, still I should have been sorry
had

had the alteration in your person been occasioned by illness."

"I never was in better health than I am at this moment," rejoined Duncan; "but you perceive, my dear grandfather, a warm climate, meagre soups, and their meagre wines, will fetch an Englishman down; and I am fearful roast beef and good home-brewed will soon bring me to my former standard, which, as I look the better for being slim, I should not relish."

The Duke, happy to see his grandson in such spirits, told him he only wished to see him happily married before he died, looking towards Elinor while speaking. Duncan coloured, but avoided looking the same way, while the now pensive Elinor ventured a smothered sigh. She had lost all her former gaiety, still she looked more interesting though less handsome than when they had left her at Paris, having in vain
tried

tried to conquer a passion she was conscious would never be returned, and which effectually destroyed her peace of mind ; an instance of female weakness Ausby had by no means expected she would display. She however exerted herself in the evening of their arrival to appear in spirits, particularly as Duncan was fearful she had not yet shook off her Parisian fright.

Their recent journey was once more travelled over, to amuse his Grace and the ladies. The Duke was particularly anxious to learn in what sort of style his son lived at Florence, and what sort of a reception he had given them. The Marquis of Hartley replied, the long stay they had made there must convince his Grace they had no reason to complain of Lord David's want of politeness, who lived in a style suitable to the part he held at the Tuscan Court, where Mr. Cameron also shone a brilliant of the first lustre.

His

His Grace appeared so well pleased, they were convinced he was totally ignorant of the real occasion of their lengthened stay at Florence. When they retired for the night, Ausby, according to his former invariable rule, attended his Grace to his dressing-room, and gave him so pleasing and at the same time so just an account of his grandson, that the good old Peer was delighted with the praises he bestowed upon his application, turn for botany, &c. declaring, he rejoiced that Nature had not formed him in the mould of a countier, as, even admitting he attained the post of Prime Minister, he would be more to be pitied than envied. He spoke from experience.—Ausby was of the same opinion : they therefore separated, mutually satisfied with each other. To Lady Helen, Ausby was more unreserved respecting what had detained them in Tuscany ; though he forbore even to hint he suspected Mr. Cameron had been more than accessory to the misfortune

misfortune which had befallen his cousin, merely observing it was him who introduced Duncan to the frail lady ; and since he had escaped so well, he hoped it would be a warning to him never to intrigue again. Lady Helen was excessively shocked when she learnt what a serious sufferer her nephew had been, declaring it would have been the death of her father had he lost his life through the treachery of the Signora Serutti. Like Ausby, she could not conceive why she should have wished to assist her husband. Surely, had she attempted when he entered to have made her escape, it would have been more natural. She hoped—Orlando—again she paused.

“ We will not entertain so horrid a suspicion,” replied Ausby ; “ therefore, tell me what you think of our dear Elinor ? ”

“ That she is striving to conquer her ill-fated partiality, and will succeed, if she is not pressed to marry her cousin ; soli-

inde has rather encreased her romantic turn, but I place great hopes in her understanding, and the strength of her good principles."

Ausby hoped she would prove a true prophet, and thus the matter dropped.

CHAP. XL.

THE following morning, during breakfast, the Marquis of Hartley said he was going into the city, to pay his respects to his worthy grandfather, Hanson, though it was very possible, not knowing the day on which they had expected to reach London, he might be out of town ; but in that case, he should proceed to Layton, and might not be able to return to dinner. The Duke requested they might not be any restraint upon him and Lady Hartley, hinting his intention of returning into Scotland as soon as possible, though he might possibly spend a month or six weeks in London.

London in the spring, as he should wish to have Duncan presented at St. James's, as well as Elinor, and to give them a taste of a London life.

"Why, this is certainly not a favourable season for visiting the metropolis," replied Ferdinand, "but I nevertheless hope your Grace will remain as long as it suits you in this house, though Lady Hartley and myself must, as I wrote you word, set out in a few days for Wales, as the Marchioness would not chuse to spend her Christmas in the country, and I much doubt whether either my father or mother will ever again visit London."

"They are much in the right," cried Duncan, "for I am sure I should be choked were I to spend six months in this smoky city. I long to breathe the pure air of the highlands once more, for I have neither pulled a trigger nor heard the sound of a gun for God knows how long; indeed,

deed, I much doubt whether I shall be able to kill a bird till I have got a little into practice - except the gape of a cur, I have heard nothing upon my travels to remind me of a pack of hounds, so be sure, it is rather colder in Scotland than we found it last winter at Paris, but I dare say the air is as pure, and we can keep the larger fires."

"True, my dear cousin," said Elinor, "and they will be less expensive than those we had at Paris, where grand-dad used to say it cost him half-a-crown to enjoy a cheerful blaze."

It was therefore decided that the Orkney party should set out for the Castle of that name the latter end of the ensuing week, as they found they should really oblige Lord and Lady Hartley in keeping possession of their house, and considering themselves as at home; they having in return promised to pass at least a month at Orkney

castle during the summer, which they could be depending at their own seat in the country. Their future plan being thus arranged, the Marquis took out Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Hamilton, proceeded to Lord Euston, and came persuaded him to return with him, and the good old man readily agreed to remain his grandson's guest till he set out for Wales, which, no moment having occurred worthy a place in this history, he and Lady Hurtle did on the third morning after their arrival in Devon, leaving the Orkney family in possession of their house, the Marquis declaring he should consider it an obligation if they would keep it and till their return.

The Duke, having a little business to transact, extended his week to a fortnight; and had not fixed the day for their departure, when one morning, as Durcan was handing his aunt and Elinor, who were going a shopping, into the farmer's coach, he

he perceived alighting from a carriage, which had stopped two doors above Hartley House, Sir Robert, Lady, and Miss Thornville, who recognised him almost at the moment he made the discovery; therefore, leaving Elinor upon the pavement, he darted forward, and met with a most cordial reception from the whole party, who were come to look at the house at which their carriage had stopped, which was to be let, and its vicinity to Hartley House made the Baronet desirous of taking it for a town residence. They had only arrived in London two days before, having spent a much longer time in Paris than they had intended. Duncan declared he would not lose so favourable an opportunity of introducing them to his grandfather, and Sir Robert, who was still more anxious to rank the Duke of Orkney among his acquaintance, readily consented to a proposal Duncan would probably not have made, had he taken a little time for reflection; but he

was

was thrown quite off his guard, by the unexpected appearance of the lovely Harriet, to whom alone he thought himself indebted for having been permitted to return to England. His aunt perceiving he was inviting the strangers into Hartley House, alighted to receive the ladies, whose names were no sooner mentioned to her, than she endeavoured, in the politest terms, to express the gratitude she felt for the infinite kindness they had shewn her nephew during his residence at Florence.

The Duke, though still in ignorance of the misfortune that had made Duncan their guest, had heard both him and Ausby, as well as Lord and Lady Hartley, speak in the highest terms of the whole family ; to whom, Ferdinand in particular, frequently declared, he considered himself very much indebted, and should take every opportunity of returning, in England, those civilities he had met with from them in Italy.

His

His Grace had been acquainted with the late Sir Robert, father of the present (who was then only a promising fine youth) when he was in the ministry; therefore, knowing the late Baronet to be a man of very great talents, as well as of a very ancient family in the West, he had expressed a wish, in consequence of these encomiums, to become acquainted with the head of the family.

Duncan, therefore, forgetting he ought to have had a little private conversation with the Baronet, before he introduced him and the ladies to his Grace, hurried them into the house: though Lady Helen began to dread the explanation which was likely to take place, in consequence of his precipitancy, before they were within the hall; but it was too late to caution her impetuous nephew, who seemed totally to have forgotten any event, had occurred it was necessary to conceal, and she could not catch

catch his eyes to give him a hint of her fears. The Duke and Ausby gave the strangers a no less polite reception than they had already experienced from Lady Helen and Miss Melross; though the latter appeared rather surprized, and almost participated in his wife's fears; nor were they unfounded, as the party had scarcely got seated before the Baronet observed, Lord Donalbain looked much better than when they parted at Florence; he therefore hoped he no longer felt any bad effects—

A look from Duncan, whose own imprudence now, for the first time, struck him, made him pause; and instantly comprehending the intimation, added, “from the warmth of the climate.”

Yet momentary as was the interruption in his speech, his confusion, together with Duncan's too visible embarrassment, Miss Thornville's heightened colour, and Aus-

by's apparent anxiety, did not then escape the Duke's notice, who guessed something had occurred, during their stay at Florence, that they did not wish to make him acquainted with ; but he was by no means of so curious a disposition as his son-in-law, having long made it a rule, never to endeavour to discover what his friends wished to conceal ; and in the present instance, he was convinced, if it had been any thing likely to redound to his grandson's honour, both Lord Hartley and Ausby would have been anxious to have made him acquainted with every particular, and he by no means wished to learn any thing likely to lower him in his esteem, the discourse was therefore soon changed.

Sir Robert accounted for his having remained so much longer at Paris than he had intended, and expressed his sorrow he had not reached London in time to see Lord and Lady Hartley, of whom he spoke
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on the highest terms of esteem ; particularly the former, whose brilliant talents had inspired his son, with such emulation, that he had resolved to spend the three next years at Cambridge, by way of prosecuting his studies with unremitting zeal ; then told the company he meant to pass the spring in London, for the purpose of introducing his daughter at St. James's, &c. ; but was for the present going into Devonshire, where he intended to spend his Christmas ; and hoped, if the Marquis of Donalbain paid a visit in their neighbourhood, he would do them the honour of looking in upon them, and of spending a few days at the Grove, if he could make it convenient ; and, after a visit of an hour, during which many polite compliments passed on all sides, the Thornvilles took their leave, after promising to call again before they left town

Lady Helen and her daughter immediately went out a shopping ; Duncan was

therefore left with his grandfather and uncle Aubrey ; the former, immediately began to rally him about Miss Thornville ; and the latter, soon after leaving them *tête-à-tête*, his Grace grew more serious, declaring “ his only wish was to see him well married, and to a woman of his own choosing, as he had his happiness at heart much more than the aggrandizement of his family ; acknowledging, he was far from satisfied with his own conduct towards him during his infancy and youth ; though upon the whole, he thought his eccentricity might rather promote his happiness, as he was convinced a rural life was much more conducive to felicity than any other.”

“ I was in hopes,” he proceeded, “ for I wish to set you the example of sincerity, that you would have placed your affections upon your cousin Elinor ; as I thought, in that case, I should always have you both under the same roof with me. It was a very selfish notion, I am ready to acknowledge ;

ledge ; but we old people are apt to think too much of ourselves, and to forget our younger days. Elmor is both a good and sensible girl, and was formerly a remarkable lively one ; she has, however, lost much of her vivacity ; indeed, I do not think she has been able entirely to shake off that languor, the dangerous fever she had at Paris left behind ; however, she will make a deserving man a good wife ; but if your affections are otherwise engaged, you would have but a poor prospect of mutual felicity. I can therefore only assure you, that my consent shall follow your choice, and that I can have no objections to the daughter of Sir Robert Thornville."

" You are very kind, my dear grandfather," replied the delighted Duncan ; " I can admire the many amiable qualities of my cousin, and have often thought there are very few women of her age to be compared to her in point of beauty and accomplishments ; yet, somehow, I never looked

forward with pleasure to her being my wife. She is infinitely more learned than I am, in the first place; and would, I am convinced, be much happier with a more fashionable man; for my own part, I never saw a woman so much to my taste for a wife as Miss Thornville: I have known her from a child, and she has recently laid me under obligations I can never repay, but by offering her my hand. Ask me no explanations, my dear Sir, for I should be ashamed to tell you how very foolish, to say no worse of myself, I have been."

"I guessed there was something you wished to conceal from my knowledge," replied his Grace, "and I am contented to remain in ignorance, as I am confident, had you been so much to blame as you hint, Sir Robert Thornville would not have courted your friendship; for I have ever heard him spoken of as a very worthy man, rather too proud: but I have ever thought, a certain degree of pride a virtue, instead of a fail-

ing. Your friend, Lord Hindley, possesses that exact *quantum sufficit*. However, if you are certain such a proposal will be cordially received by the Baronet, I will wait upon him, to request leave for you to be permitted to address the young lady in form, and to talk over settlements, jointure, &c. She will have, at least, a tolerable fortune, I suppose ; for let me tell you, money ought not to be despised, though I should despise either the man or woman, who married solely from interested motives, notwithstanding it is much the fashion among our present young men of rank, who think it a very easy method of retrieving their past extravagance ; though it frequently only renders both the man and the unfortunate object of their choice miserable for life. I might, had I chosen, old as I was, to play the fool, soon after you were born, have much sooner redeemed the mortgage, I was so long in saving sufficient money to discharge ; and might have been ;

perhaps, enabled to have had you always under my own eye ; but I think I pursued a better plan."

" I am sure you did," my dear Sir, " I have sense enough to be aware of my own deficiencies ; and trust I shall never again make you blush for my rusticity ; and had I had the same advantages Lord Hartley has enjoyed, I do not think I should ever have been either such a scholar or such an orator ; the latter in particular, is, I am convinced, a talent very few men possess ; and had I even rivalled him, which would have been next to impossible, I do not suppose I should have done any more good ; and old Daddy Price always maintained, a good farmer was better than a good orator. The Marquis of Hartley is, I believe, both ; but I have stuck to the useful only."

Mr. Ausby returned while he was speaking, and the Duke exclaimed in gay tone :
" Why

“ Why you ran away very *mal-a-propos*, Charles. Do you know, during your absence, I have been endeavouring to relieve you from one of your incumbrances ? But like many more well built castles in the air, my fabrick has fallen to the ground ; for that young rogue had rather address Sir Robert Thornville by the name of father than you. I suppose he thinks you are sufficiently related.”

“ I have long been acquainted with the state of my young friend’s heart,” was the reply, “ and you know I never approved of marriages between cousins.”

“ I believe you are right ; indeed, I am fearful my wish to promote a union between Duncan and Elinor was grounded upon a very selfish motive ; as I now think it very possible they may be much happier apart. Duncan has acknowledged his prepossession in favour of Miss Thornville, and I have promised to propose the matter to her father.”

“ Why you have been doing a great deal of business during my absence,” rejoined Ausby.

“ You know,” said the Duke, “ I am very averse to procrastination ; when once I come to a resolution, I like to bring matters to bear as soon as possible. The Baronet told us he meant to leave London in a couple of days ; and as I can talk much better than I can write, I shall wait upon him immediately ; though I do not suppose, admitting no unforeseen obstacles arise, that we shall have a wedding this Christmas.”

“ If matters are put in train for such an event, does your Grace mean to give up the idea of returning into the north, as you proposed ?” inquired Ausby.

“ By no means,” replied his Grace. “ perhaps the Baronet would wish the ceremony should be performed at one of his seats ; though I should prefer my heir’s being married at the Castle : but it is all in good
good

good time to talk over these and many other points, as it is possible, the young lady may be engaged, or the Baronet may have other views for her."

"Then" said Duncan, "you shall see, my dear Sir, how heroicall' I will behave, should you meet with a refusal; for I am not sure, uncle Aubby, whether gratitude does not predominate over love. You understand me, I have merely hinted to my grandfather the young lady has done me a very essential service."

"In detaching you from an Italian courtesan, perhaps," rejoined the Duke laughing at Duncan's glowing checks, "but I require no explanation."

The return of Lady Helen and her daughter was very a-propos in Aubby's opinion, as Duncan immediately began to tell them his happy prospects, requesting they would wish him success, joy must come afterwards. Far from appearing dis-

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appointed,

appointed, Elinor displayed the greatest satisfaction, being perfectly acquainted with her grandfather's former wishes, which, though she had resolved not absolutely to oppose, she was extremely glad to hear were totally altered, as he now seemed as eager to promote a match between Duncan and Miss Thornville, as he had been once to promote one with Elinor. No longer, therefore, dreading a proposition she thought would be so inimical to her happiness, she appeared as if relieved from a state of the most uneasy anxiety, and appeared much gayer during the evening than she had been since she left Paris, a remark her mother made with the most heartfelt sensation.

The following morning his Grace set out alone for the Baronet's, with whom he immediately requested a private audience, when he opened his embassy in due form, and soon perceived he had no reason to
fear

fear a refusal, as the Baronet assured him he had long been convinced his daughter had given a decided preference to his grandson before she knew he was heir to the Orkney title and estate, readily entering into every necessary explanation respecting fortune, &c. the young lady having been very amply provided for by a maiden sister of Lady Thornville's, who had left her her whole fortune, amounting to thirty thousand pounds. To this sum the Baronet proposed adding twenty on her wedding-day, and as much more at his death; declaring he had long determined she should please herself in her choice of a husband, even had it fallen upon Mr. Price's supposed nephew, as he could never have endured the idea of making her miserable for life, though in that case she would have married as much beneath her as she would now do the reverse; saying every thing, in short, likely to flatter his Grace, who returned home perfectly satisfied with the

the

the reception he had met with, while the overjoyed Baronet went to impart the pleasing tidings to his wife and daughter, who, it may be supposed, were not displeased when they learnt the purport of the Duke's visit, though it was agreed not to postpone their journey into Devonshire, her ladyship not wishing to appear too forward; besides, the Marquis might take the opportunity to visit Coombe, from whence he could ride over whenever he chose to go to Elm Grove; suffice it to say, both families were mutually pleased with the projected alliance, and thus Duncan was introduced as her intended husband to Miss Thornville, with whom he spent the greatest part of the two following days, when every necessary arrangement having been made for the ensuing two months, which Duncan was to spend at Coombe, and the Baronet's, at the expiration of which time the whole party were to assemble at Orkney Castle, where the marriage ceremony was to be performed

performed early in the spring. The Thornvilles, after breakfasting in Grovesnor-Square, set out for Devonshire, leaving Duncan to follow them in the course of a few days, who had some notion of first accompanying his grandfather into Scotland, and then taking Lancelotti in his way into Devonshire ; though, having entered into a correspondence with Ferdinand, he did not fail to write him an account of his having commenced lover, observing he had studied the part of husband under so good a performer, he hoped he should shine in the character of Benedict.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE days after the Thornvilles had left London, and before the family had left the dining parlour, though the Duke did not conform to fashionable hours, Lord David Cameron was announced, who requested to see his Grace in another room. "My son David in London!" cried his Grace, very much surprised by the intelligence: "shew him in here. Did not you tell him, Morton,—(his own man had brought in the message)—none but friends were with me?"

"I did,

“ I did, your Grace, and he had before been told so by Lord Hartley’s porter, of whom he particularly inquired who was with you ; but he desired to be shewn into another room, and sent me in with the message I have delivered.”

“ Very well,” was the reply, “ I will join him in a few minutes.”—The servant left the room, and his Grace proceeded.—

“ What, in the name of wonder, can have brought him home thus unexpectedly from such a petty court ? Something of the first importance I should presume, since a messenger will not suffice. Surely he has not obtained any intelligence of my much lamented Dudley ?”

“ Don’t flatter yourself with any such hopes, my dear Sir,” interrupted Aufby ; “ Lord David is the last man from whom I should expect intelligence of that nature.”

“ Why, my dear Charles ?” asked the Duke, astonished at the warmth with which he spoke.

Duke,

“ Because — because ” — hesitated the confused Ausby, “ I cannot suppose Lord Dudley sought an asylum in Italy. Had Lord David been stationed at Lisbon, I should have thought there might have been some foundation for your conjecture ; political business has most likely brought his Lordship over.”

“ I shall soon learn,” said the not absolutely satisfied Duke, who thought Ausby’s warmth not very clearly accounted for, “ but what could prevent him from coming in here, particularly in the absence of Lord and Lady Hartley ? he cannot have any business with me which requires privacy ; however, I will go and hear what he has got to say, though I suppose it will prove the mountain delivered of a mouse,” leaving the room.

Ausby fell into a reverie the moment his Grace had closed the door, from which he was roused by Duncan’s observing Lord David was come in very good time to
dance

dance at his wedding. "I wonder whether his son is come over with him?" said Ausby.

"I hope not," cried Elinor.

"Depend upon it he is left in charge at Florence, my fair coz."

Ausby relapsed into his former train of thought ; then said, "'tis very odd, but I am convinced he is come over upon something very foreign to what his Grace conjectured. Yet," starting up, and beginning to pace the room, "I hardly know what to think."

"Who knows but he may have stumbled upon a certain lady," said Duncan, "whom he may be anxious to bring to justice."

"I am convinced that conjecture is as erroneous as the one the Duke has formed," was the reply.

"I am glad to hear you say so, uncle, for her own conscience will be sufficient."

At that moment Duncan reflected neither his aunt nor cousin were in the secret, therefore

fore stopped short ; which Elinor perceiving, desired him, in a gay tone, to proceed, as she did not at present understand what or who he meant.

“ People in love, my fair coz, are frequently unintelligible : who knows, talking of that, but my uncle David is come over to implore your compassion for his dearly beloved Orlando ? I can now feel for him, and would have you reflect before you absolutely reject his suit. What an irreparable loss it will be to old England should you doom him to despair ! Consider, all his promising talents will be lost to the rising generation ; for if your rejection is not the occasion of his immediate death, he may pine himself into an atrophy, and thus sink into the grave a martyr to unrequited love. I do not think Lord Hartley could have concluded an oration with a smoother period. What say you, uncle ? ”

“ That you will be a compleat orator in time.

time. You begin to perceive the good effects of love upon an unpolished mind."

"I am a second Cymon, though not absolutely dying for my Iphigenia."

Thus was Duncan running on when the Duke returned alone, and closing the door hastily after him, his countenance denoting internal rage; without speaking, he began to pace the room, till suddenly stopping, he stamped his foot with amazing vehemence; and, as if anxious to wreak his vengeance upon something, caught hold of first one, then another chair, raising them from the ground, and letting them fall with the utmost violence. Such behaviour was so unusual, and so unlike what any of the party had ever before witnessed from his Grace, that they all rose from their seats, and gazed at each other in silent wonder, not daring to address him, till stopping directly opposite to Duncan, and looking him full in the face, he exclaimed,

" 'Tis

"'Tis false, by Heavens! 'tis false, the whole universe assembled should never make me credit so scandalous an assertion."

"My dear Sir," said the agitated Duncan, who thought he referred to his Florentine intrigue, "for heaven sake tell me what has happened! What has that uncle of mine been telling you to put you in such a passion?"

"Telling me!" he exclaimed, catching him in his arms, "why, he has been telling me, my dear boy, that I have been imposed upon; but it cannot be, I know it is impossible, and were it true, by Heaven! he shall reap no benefit from the discovery; he shall have as much law as he pleases, but it will be sometime, I fancy, before he establishes what he aims at. Why, your very countenance gives the lie to his assertion, for every day of my life do you remind me of my lamented misguided Donalbain. Is not he Ausby—Is not he the living image of his father?"

"Upon

“ Upon my soul, grand dad.” replied Duncan very calmly, “ I am at a loss to comprehend your meaning. My uncle tells you, you have been imposed upon, now that is all very possible, I only know I have never endeavoured to impose upon you ; so, according to the old saying, let each tub stand upon its own bottom ; but if you will be so good as to explain what you mean amongst us, perhaps we shall be able to help you out.”

A violent flood of tears appeared to relieve the agitated Duke, which greatly affecting Duncan, he said it was well it was his uncle, any other person he would have taught to use a little more caution before they imparted any disagreeable intelligence. —“ But do, my dear Sir, explain why you are thus hurt ; I suppose he has made out I am not your heir at last, and upon my soul, I cannot contradict his assertions ; nor would the certainty of it afflict me one
tenth

tenth part to much as it does you, provided I do but preserve your friendship and esteem."

The Duke once more caught him in his arms, saying, "No event can deprive you of either, my dear boy, nor of your birth-right, I am convinced; but let me sit down, and then I will explain what has thus provoked me, as I wish you all to assist me with your advice, though I have already determined how to act, as I am convinced the whole I have been listening to is an abominable fabrication. Never, surely, was man so unfortunate in his children as I have been, and this is my last, and I have every reason to believe my only son. Surely, my juvenile errors must have been of a very criminal nature if I am justly dealt with; and who dare arraign the Divine will? But I am fearful you will all think me mad, and upon my word I am little better, for I scarcely know what I would either do or say."

Lady

Lady Helen, who had taken her seat next him, assisted by Ausby, tenderly reasoned him into some degree of composure, and then enquired, why her brother did not come in, and whether he did not wish to see them ?

“ No, no,” replied the Duke, “ it was not his regard for any part of this family that brought him to England, he is come over in hopes of tormenting me to death, and immediately taking possession of my title and estate ; but I left him in the library, where I desired him to wait my summons. He wished to have called again in the morning, but I told him I should immediately inform you all why he had come over ; he however affects very refined feelings, and declares he should have found it impossible to tell his story before the person immediately concerned. I only wish my feelings were under as much command ; but, in short, he has obtained leave of absence to come and tell me he has

found out some old woman who has got another old relation to swear to the truth of all she advances, and between them both they wish to persuade me Duncan is not my heir, but the son of somebody whose name they are not acquainted with : however, David shall tell you his own story, and if you think there is the least probable foundation for what he so boldly asserts, why, the matter shall be enquired into ; though to me the whole appears merely a plausible fiction. What is your opinion, my dear Charles ?”

“ You must excuse my giving any, my dear Sir, till I am a little more acquainted with the business.”

“ True, true, David shall te'l his own story, and you shall decide what degree of credit it deserves.”

“ Is Mr. Cameron also in England ?” enquired Ausby.

“ Oh, yes, and as anxious as his father, no doubt, for the success of their scheme ;
but

but they will not find it so easy a matter as they expected to frighten me out of my few remaining senses. Such a family likeness could not exist if this dear boy was not related to me ; and shall I tamely suffer him to be robbed of his birth-right to benefit an ignorant insignificant puppy, who is a disgrace to the country, and the family he sprung from ?”

“ Let me request, my dear Sir, you would not be thus affected upon my account,” said Duncan, “ I can very well return to what I was, only stock me one of your smallest farms, and you shall see I will live like a petty Prince. I must, to be sure, give up the hopes I entertained, as I do not suppose Sir Robert Thornville will accept of me for a son-in law ; however, though I own I shall regret the loss of Harriet more than my title, I shall console myself with the reflection, that “ *whatever is, is right.*”

“ You shall give up nothing, if I can help it, my dear Duncan ; and be assured

of this, that whatever they may be able to prove, and prove their assertions they shall in every court of justice in England, you will never be the less dear to me, nor shall I content myself with placing you even in one of my largest cars. But I will send for the sentimental David. He has, I hope, recovered sufficient composure to bear your presence, though the hope of a person on whom wishes to injure will occasion even the greatest heroes a few quivers of conscience ; but I wish him to explain what I must acknowledge I am myself very imperfectly acquainted with, as I have no patience to listen to him."

"Then let us adjourn into the drawing-room," said Aubrey.

"We will retire," said Lady Helen, looking at her daughter, which they did immediately ; while the gentlemen went up stairs, and were soon joined by Lord David, who really was, or affected to be, very much agitated. Duncan was the first to advance towards him, extending his hand,

kind, and welcoming him to England; adding, "I dare not call you uncle after what I have learnt, yet I cannot suppose you will object to shaking hands with an old acquaintance, whose disposition has undergone no change, and whose ever his projects may have been."

"Certainly not," said the Envoy, taking the proffered hand.

"How is Mr. Cantor?" continued De Witt, "and all our old acquaintance that we left at Florence?"

"My father is very good health, I am much obliged to you, Sir, but could not be prevailed on to accompany me further. Indeed, I fear, as I had been informed by his wife, could talk my regard for her into time, and so I am."

"I wish you were off, Lord David," cried the impatient Duke, "your knowing fine circumstances and speculations are my aversion, therefore perceive what you have been endeavouring to make me comprehend, to

my son Ausby and this young gentleman, whom neither you nor all the old women in the world will make me believe is not my grandson. You have already told me I am prejudiced, and will not listen to reason:—that may be, therefore try if you will find more complaisant auditors in these gentlemen. If my son, Ausby, allows there is the least shadow of probability in your story, I may be inclined to listen to you with more patience, though I am convinced you have been imposed upon instead of me.”

“ I shall obey your orders, Sir, as I hope both Mr. Ausby and that young gentleman will do me the justice to believe, that nothing short of the most convincing proofs of the truth of the story I am going to enter upon would have induced me to undertake such a journey, or to disturb the harmony of your family. I will not for a moment suppose you can think I wish to impose upon you, or that I would attempt
to

to rob a young man for whom I have the highest esteem of his birth right. God forbid so ! No idea should have ever entered my head. No, my dear Ausby," rejoined Lord David, " duty, not inclination, obliged me to assert my son's rights : for my own part, I already enjoy as many luxuries as I ever coveted ; but I am a father, and consequently accountable not only to my son, but his sons' sons, for my conduct upon this trying occasion ; for, surely, the hereditary honours of our family ought to descend in a direct line to the remotest branches of so illustrious a race. I mean no offence, I assure you, young gentleman," looking at Duncan, " nor can any blame attach to you for having usurped a title you were not born to inherit. This I hope to make perfectly clear, or, depend upon it, I should not, as I before said, have undertaken the very unpleasant task of undeceiving you."

" For heaven sake, Lord David, come"

to the point," once more exclaimed the impatient Duke, "I have such long preface. Is this young man my heir, or not?---that is all I wish to have decided."

"I am very well convinced he is not," was the reply. "I repeat you have been imposed upon, though I do not mean even to hint you or any part of the family have been to blame."

"Will your Lordship be so obliging as to tell me who I am?" asked Duncan.

"I cannot take upon me to resolve your question."

"Then I can only say," rejoined Duncan, "may I be smothered if I had not rather have it proved I am the bastard son of Daddy Price's old man George than that I am your heir."

"Your vulgarity would almost induce me to believe you do not spring from a much more honourable source," retorted the offended Envoy.

"No reflections, I insist, Lord David ;
whenever

whoever he is, remember he is under my protection, and I applaud his spirit, which has a very different effect upon my mind, as it convinces me he is your brother's son, and I will defend his rights as strenuously as I would my son's, and, even should you be able to establish the claim you have chose to make to my title and fortune, depend upon it, I will enable him to support the character of a gentleman."

"Your Grace has an undoubted right to dispose of your personals as you think proper, I merely step forward in defence of my son's rights. Had I been childless, I would not have attempted to break in upon what I find is so pleasing a delusion: for, positively, rather than have occasioned you a moment's anxiety, I would have waved all claims, and either suffered our family honours to have sunk into oblivion, or have allowed this young man to succeed to the title and estate which he has been led to believe were his rights."

“ I have frequently had proof* of the *disinterestedness* of your disposition. David : still you must excuse me if I frankly acknowledge I do not give the least credit to your last speech, nor will you I find oblige me by relating simple facts.”

“ Far be it from me, your Grace, to wish to trespass upon your time a moment longer than absolutely necessary; but I will appeal to Mr. Ausby, whether he could have abruptly entered upon a story like the one I am obliged to relate. What I have at stake does not divest me of my feelings; besides, I am well aware how unpleasant your Grace will find it to be obliged to acknowledge he has suffered a child of unknown parents to be imposed upon him as my brother's son. The very reflection almost tempted me to wave my claim, at least during his life-time; but I was told by a gentleman learned in the law, that in that case I must be contented to drop it entirely. This my duty towards my son
absolutely

absolutely forbids ; though, had Orlando made himself a greater interest in your Grace's aff'ction, during his stay at Oikney Castle, I should have felt far more satisfied, and been much less reluctant to dispossess a favourite to secure him his rights. Your Grace has led so recluse a life of late, you would not justly appreciate my son's merits, whose rank, and my official situation, have compelled him to move in the first Italian circles, and who has consequently adopted those refined foreign manners which made so unfavourable an impression upon you."

"For heaven sake, Lord David, cease to wound my ears and feelings by so fullsome a panegyric upon your son, whom I never did nor never shall like ; yet I can discern, notwithstanding the recluse life I have led, the superior merits of Lord Hartley ; however, I now and ever shall pry your coxcomb of a boy may never be Duke of Oikney. Nevertheless, if you can prove
N 6 what

what you have asserted, why, I suppose a such an event would indubitably lessen my dissolution, he may in time disgrace that title. But if you will not enter upon your story, I shall leave the room."

"Pray oblige his Grace, my Lord," said Duncan; "you have made me thoroughly sensible of my insignificance, I am therefore as quiet as a mouse in a cheese; another proof you would say of the vulgarity of my origin."

"In almost every sentence you utter, young man," replied Lord David, "traces of a vulgar origin are to be discovered. A plebeian education alone could never have so far debased my brother's son, and the true heir to the Orkney title and estates. Had that son lived, in whatever obscurity his Grace might have thought proper that he should have been brought up, the blood of the Orkneys would have circled in his veins, and inspired him with the love
of

of acquirements superior to the humble station in which he had been placed; in short, would have indelibly stamped him to be the representative of that ancient and honourable house. His Grace, under the influence of strong delusion, has imbibed so great a partiality for you, as my brother's son, that the bare mention of even a possibility that his goodacts may have been imposed upon, gives him manifest uneasiness, and induces him to treat both what I say, and the merits of my son, with very little ceremony. Without, however, making invidious comparisons, I shall proceed to relate what you seem so anxious to learn, but which will, I doubt not, fully substantiate the claims of Orlando to the dukedom of Orkney."

"Once more, David," cried the Duke, "I entreat you to proceed: leave your fine speeches, and bring us to the matter of fact."

"Aye, do, my Lord, out with it," rejoined

joined Duncan, "and let us have no more of your flummery. I cannot bear to see my grandfather so uneasy; for, in spite of my vulgar origin and my base blood, and in defiance of the story you threaten us with, I feel I must still call him by that name. So begin, or I must propose that the company be jogging."

The Duke, who felt the full force of his grandson's last speech, wiped his eyes, but made no farther observation.

Ausby, who had for some time sat a silent spectator of the passing scene, and who feared that Lord David might still add something to provoke Duncan, and prolong the altercation, now conjured the Envoy to commence his narration, and no longer torture the feelings of those who were so deeply interested in the truth or falsehood of the allegations it contained.

"His

“ His Grace,” continued Ausby, “ has promised to do justice to your son, provided you can establish his claims to the Orkney inheritance; and, however unpleasant it may be to his feelings to have all his plans in favour of his supposed heir destroyed by this one act, yet to maintain that honourable character for which he has ever been distinguished, I am confident he will keep his word. It remains, therefore, with you to remove his scruples respecting your son’s claims to the title, and to satisfy his mind by the most unequivocal proofs, that Duncan is not, as he believes him to be, his grandson.”

The Duke observed, “ that he must be most fully satisfied on all the points roused upon by Mr. Ausby, before he could entertain the most distant idea of even listening to Lord David’s claims in behalf of his conceited son, for whom he could not help expressing an insuperable
aversion,

aversion. As for your complaints of the little ceremony with which I treat you, Lord David," continued he, "I must appeal to your own conduct for a justification of mine; and I promise to you beforehand, that every tittle and circumstance of your story shall be most strictly scrutinized, that if fraud or fallacy lurk beneath, they may be dragged to the light, and the fabricators meet that punishment which their deserved infamy demands. Proceed, therefore, to narrate what you conceive to be facts, and divest them as much as possible of all extraneous matter; for as they affect the rights and inheritance of the Marquis of Donalbhain, which I am determined to defend against all interested and insidious attacks, believe me, they must be well substantiated before I will admit them, notwithstanding your reproach as to my credulity in having suffered Duncan to be imposed upon me as my grandson."

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The Duke having delivered these words in an impressive tone, ceased to speak; when Lord David, after a moment's pause, bowing to his Grace and Auby, commenced his narration in the following words:

“About ten days after you had left Florence, an English gentleman of the name of Benson came there for the benefit of his health, and left his card at my hotel. I invited him to dine with me the following Sunday, according to my general rule, and he waited upon me at the appointed time. During the course of the day I mentioned the recent departure of Lord Hartley, my supposed nephew, and you, Mr. Auby. Mr. Benson merely bestowed some very just encomiums upon the Marquis of Hartley, who is certainly an honour to the British Peerage, and then asked a few questions respecting the supposed Lord Donalbain

baird I hardly know what replies I made to his questions, and had even forgot such a person as Mr. Benton was in existence. The Wednesday following, being seated in one of the lower apartments, I chanced to hear a dispute in the hall, of which I took no notice till one of my servants came to inform me an Englishwoman wished to speak with me, though of so shabby an appearance he had endeavoured to get rid of her, without troubling me to listen to what she had to say, but found her so obstinately bent upon seeing me, that he had not been able to succeed. I reprimanded the fellow for his mistaken zeal, as I make it a point to see whatever English of either sex, or of whatever rank, who claim my protection, which I consider merely fulfilling my duty. She had asked for the Marquis of Donalbain, he told me ; and upon finding he was gone when he had left Florence, and had next enquired whether I was not his uncle,

uncle,

uncle, and upon being answered in the affirmative, she said she wished to speak with me; and upon his refusing to shew her to me high words had arose. I instantly sent for her, and enquired what she had to say. 'I was in hopes, my Lord,' she replied, 'of seeing the Marquis of Donalbain.'—'And what had you to say to him, good woman?' I enquired.—'Why, your Lordship must know,' she proceeded, 'I have been very unfortunate, as a body may say; and so, having nursed him, and being in a foreign country, I thought he would be very likely to relieve me; nay, I am sure he would if I could have but seen him, and have provided handsomely for me, now I am past my work.'—As she really appeared to be what she had told me, namely, a nurse, I asked her how she came to be at such a distance from home, and how she came to know the Marquis of Donalbain was or had been in France, and how she came

came to know I was his uncle ? In answer to which queries she informed me she had left London eight months before, with a lady in a very bad state of health, whom she attended abroad in the capacity of nurse. This lady had died at Nice during the spring, and not having left sufficient property behind her to defray the necessary expences, she (the nurse) was left without a guinea in her pocket, and unable of course to return home; but fortunately, as she thought it at the time, Mr. Benson had engaged her in the same capacity; but he was so bad tempered a man that no one could bear with his humour, ‘and so, your Lordship,’ she went on, ‘I heard him mention the name of the Marquis of Donalbain the other day, saying he was your nephew, and as I understood him the young gentleman was still at Florence, I resolved to apply to him, for if I had but money enough to carry me home, I would not
stop’

flap another day with Mr. Benson, who treats me the worse, I verily believe, because I cannot help myself.'---As this tale appeared very plausible, I enquired how long it was since she had seen the Marquis of Donabun? After taking some time for reflection, she replied, it must be near two-and twenty years. She had been engaged to nurse his deceased mother in her lying-in, and had been removed with the child to Orkney House, who had been taken from her not long afterwards, and sent she knew not whither. This reply was so very different to what I had expected, I asked her rather sternly how she could think of applying to a person upon whose benevolence she had so little claim, since it was impossible for either him or me to know whether she spoke truth; and admitting she did, her presence could only serve to remind my nephew of his irreparable loss, therefore would certainly not occasion him
any

any agreeable reflections. The woman, who had a sort of cunning leer upon her countenance, said, she believed she should be able to convince his Lordship his mother's death was rather a fortunate circumstance for him. So strange an answer induced me to question her more closely, and she continuing to fling out such unintelligible hints, I thought it necessary to threaten her into some sort of explanation concerning her ambiguous meaning; assuring her, if she permitted herself to utter any thing derogatory to my nephew's honour, I would have her immediately secured, assuring her she should not quit my presence until she had convinced me she had not been endeavouring to impose upon my credulity. Terrified by these menaces, she fell upon her knees before me, and after a violent flood of tears assured me, if I would but promise to protect her, and insure her from coming to any harm, she would confess all she

she knew respecting Lord Donalbain, as she had been long convinced she should never be able to die easy with such a secret upon her mind : indeed she had long intended to have revealed it, but scarcely knew to whom to apply. In order to induce her to make this said confession, which I presumed would amount to nothing, I promised all she desired, and she proceeded to inform me what she had to relate more materially concerning me and my son than any other person, as from what she had learnt from Mr. Benson, she understood I was the only surviving son of the Duke of Orkney, in which case she could convince me I was Marquis of Donalbain instead of the young gentleman who now bore that title. Excessively surprised, and very impatient to hear how she would make this out, I commanded her to rise, and having made her take a seat desired her to begin her story, promising, if
she

she endeavoured to disguise the truth, I would shew her no mercy. She coughed and thus began. I committed the heads of her tale to paper almost immediately and will therefore read what I wrote to you, Gentlemen. I put it down as nearly in her own words as I could recollect, beginning as follows in the next volume.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

